



the PARIS REVIEW

26

**MARIANNE
MOORE**

and

**ILYA
EHRENBURG**

two interviews

A PORTFOLIO OF
RUSSIAN POETRY

ROBERT LOWELL

MALCOLM
LOWRY

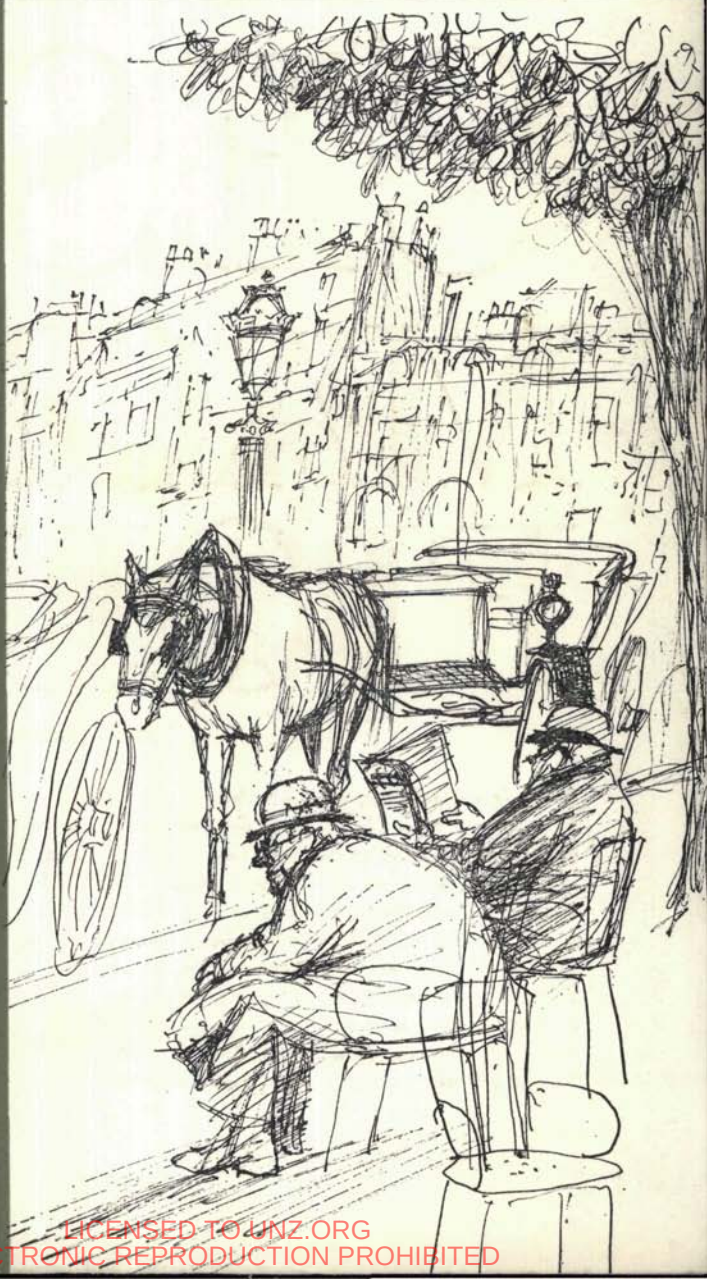
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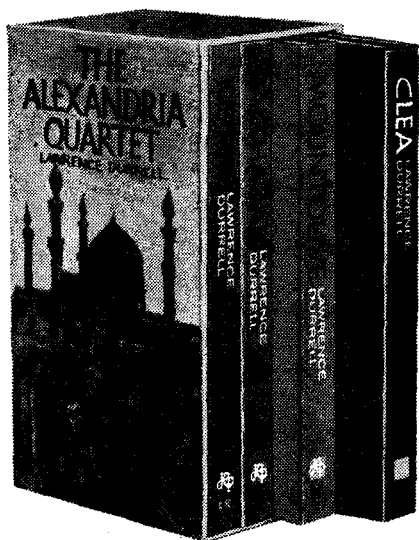
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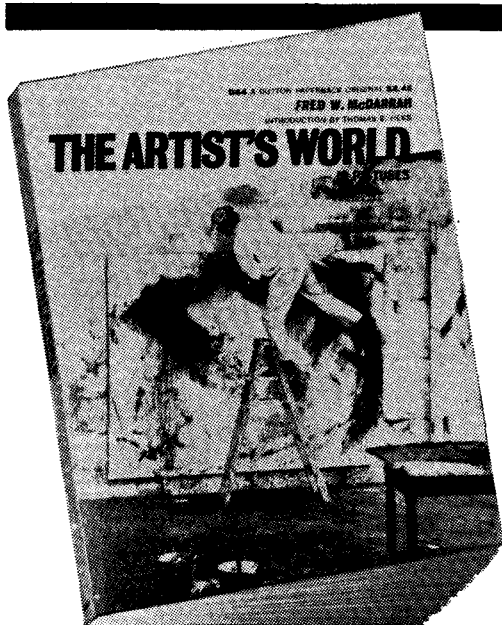
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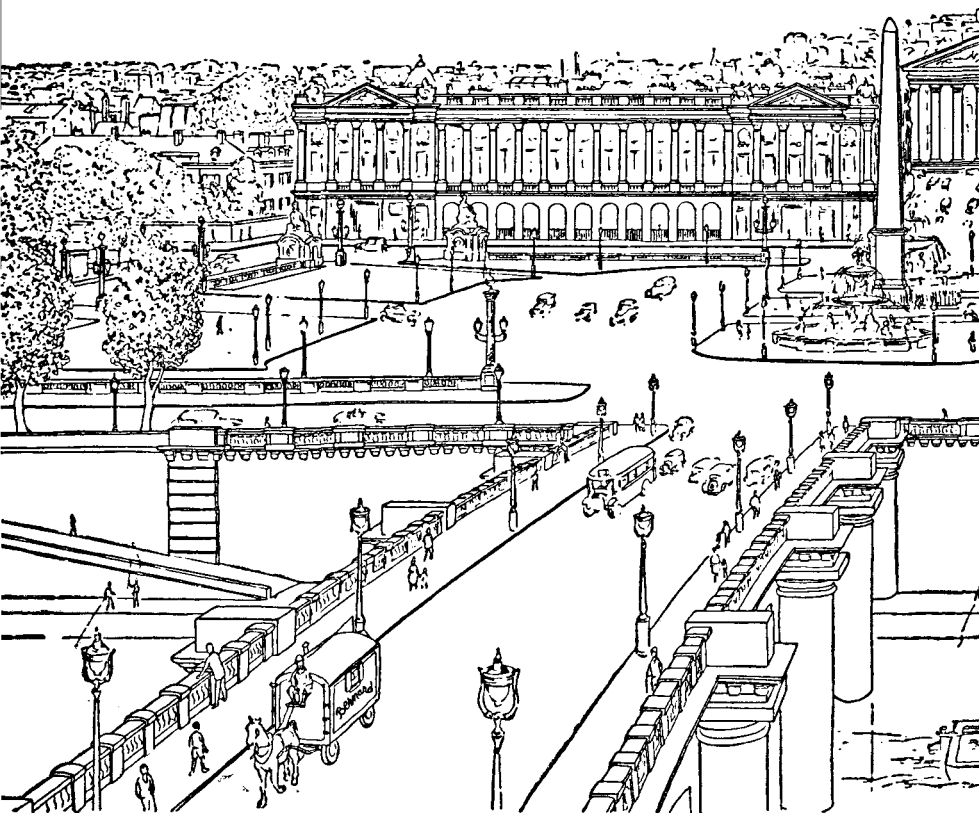
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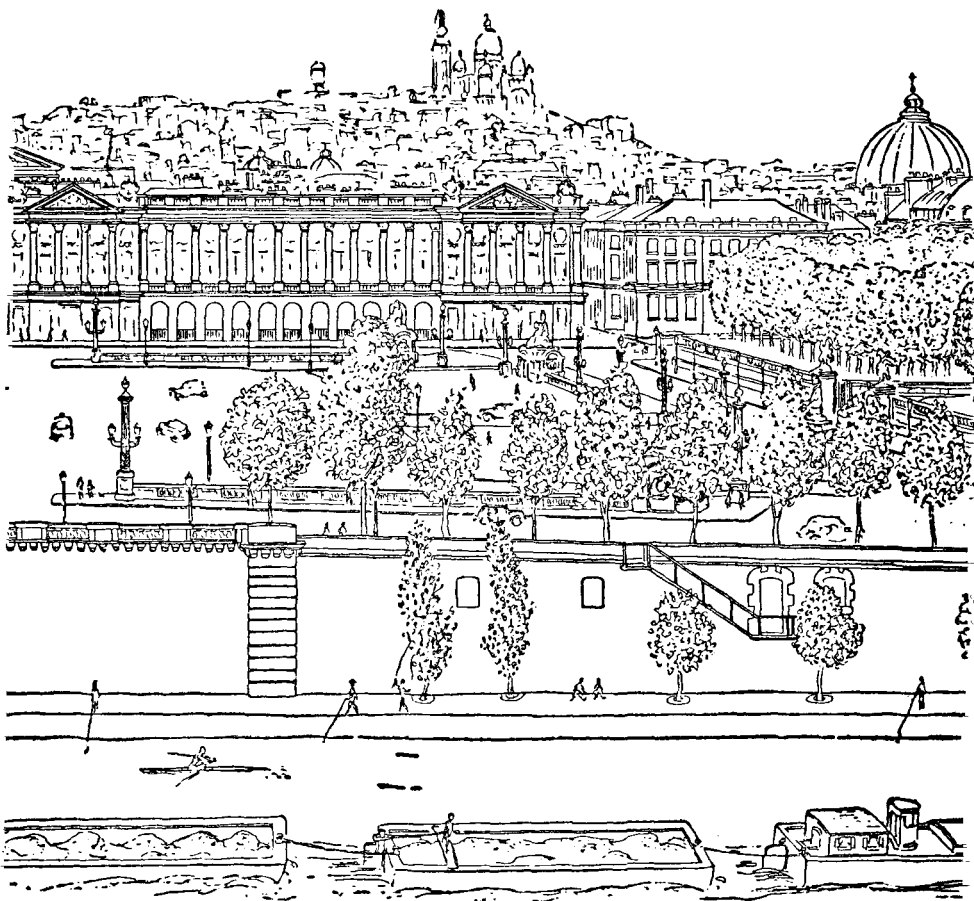


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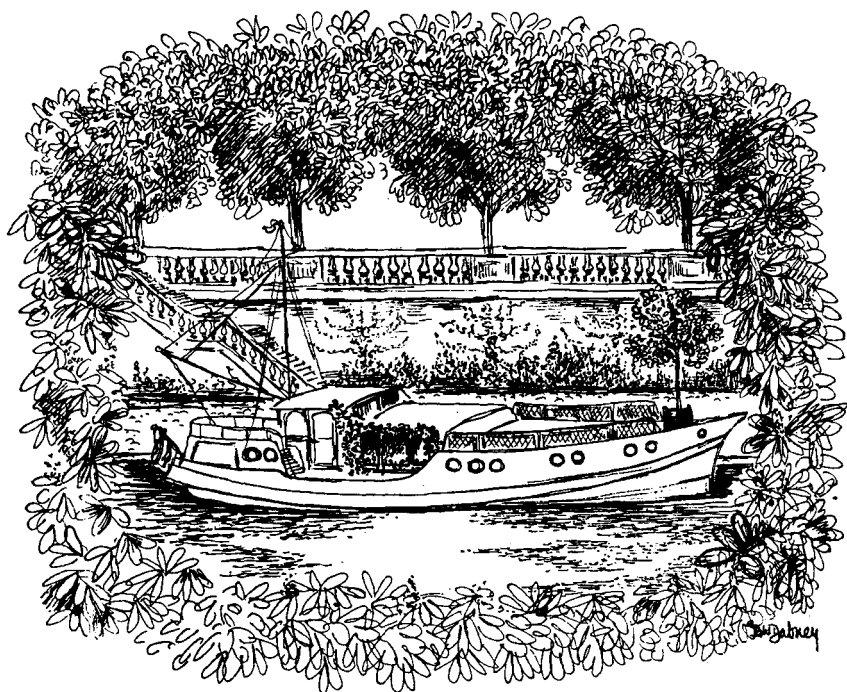
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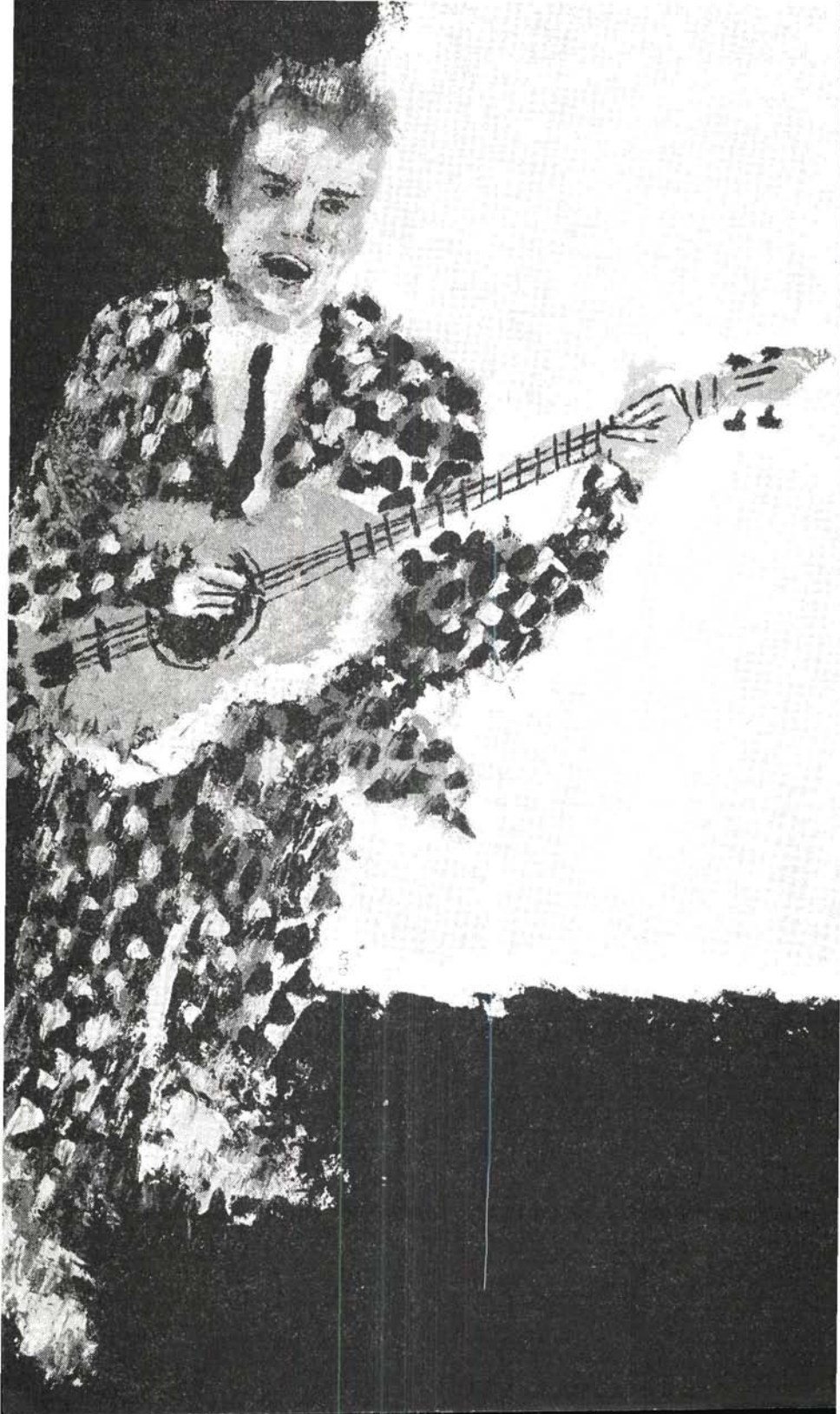
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HUGHES RUDD

MISS EUAYLA
IS THE SWEETEST *THANG*!

The first day Miss Euayla came into the China Nook, my style just hit her right in the eye. I was dusting off some armadillo baskets when she came in the door and I thought, Lafond T. Cunningham, that's your life mate. Yes, sir. I dropped those baskets and came skipping around the counter and right up to her.

"You sweet *thang*!" I hollered, and went right up on my toes and kissed her on the cheek. You wouldn't believe it, but that's the way I am, impulsive, just impulsive to a fault.

Well, Miss Euayla just stood there a while, looking down at me, neither of us moving an inch, but I could see the feathers in her hat trembling and I just waited her out until finally she just *had* to say something.

"Well," she said. "You sure think you're somebody, don't you."

"That's right," I said, quick as a wink, right back at her. "My name's Lafond T. Cunningham and I'm no bigger than a shotgun."

Well, we just both broke out to laughing until we couldn't see where we were and finally Miss Euayla staggered over and sat down on a wireback chair, whooping and choking until I thought she'd never recover, and I sort of tottered out the door onto the sidewalk, bent over backwards and holding on to my head with both hands, and then I tottered back into the China Nook, my face as red as a dime bandanna. I was screaming like an Indian full of turpentine. We just hit it off right from the start, and all because of my style.

That's just what Rabe Thompson *doesn't* have, of course: my style. I don't care what they say about how good looking he is, and what if he is six feet tall? He's just a big lump of

illustration by Guy

nothing if you ask me and he got mighty worried as soon as he found out I was seeing Miss Euayla. Thought he *knew* something. Went around telling people I was after Miss Euayla's farm, can you imagine that? Me? Working in the China Nook with a perfectly assured future career ahead of me at that time and don't know a plow from a prunehook. I tried to tell him that the night he hid in my car and tried to scare me silly.

Miss Euayla and me'd been out to the Hickory Rib, sitting in a booth drinking ammonia cokes and playing nickels in the music vendor and that's absolutely all, and about ten o'clock I drove her up into the front yard and parked my '33 Chevie under that big chinaberry tree. We got right out of the car and went in the house and she fixed me a big glass of Kool-Aid, it was hotter than a blister that night, and I came right out of the house and down the steps and bumped into that Chevie before I even saw it. They have darker nights in McClellan county than anywhere in the world, I guess. Well, I got in the car and before I could even step on the starter I feel somebody's breath on the back of my neck and a voice says, "Now I got you!" and without even thinking I let out a holler and started kicking my feet on the floorboards. I like to broke my ankle on the brake pedal, if you want to know the truth. I have very delicate bones.

Well, as soon as I started hollering I heard Miss Euayla start hollering in the house and here she came busting through the screen door and down the steps in the dark like a boxcar of loose roller skates being unloaded.

"Lafond!" she hollered, and ran right into the side of the car. "Damn!" she said, "are you all right?" and right then she sort of grunted and I heard a man's voice say, "Ain't this a fine way to behave? Ain't it?" and it was the same voice that had been talking to me in the car. That scared me so bad I started kicking my feet on the floorboards again so I missed some of what they said, but it was Rabe Thompson hiding out there, waiting and trying to catch us. He and Miss Euayla scuffled around in the dark, both of them cussing and yelling, and Rabe Thompson making out what a skunk I was.

"All he wants is your farm!" he yelled, and Miss Euayla yelled back, "You're a liar! You're a liar!"

It was terrible, the way they kept it up. I rolled up all the windows and locked the doors and nearly suffocated. Every once in a while I'd lean down and holler through the little doors that open up by your feet on those '33 Chevies, but they didn't pay any attention. They'd known each other all their lives, you know. It's a very unhealthy situation, the way people live out in the country, and when they get mad it seems like there isn't anything they won't say to each other, just for spite. Now, growing up in Fort Worth like I did, it's an altogether different thing. You don't have all kinds of people keeping track of you all the time in the city. In Fort Worth it's just plain old "Live and let live." Powder river, let 'er buck, that's the word up there. But of course it's not that way down in McClellan county.

That's one reason why, although Miss Euayla was taken with me right from the minute she saw me in the China Nook, she couldn't quite make me out. I just had a different air than anything she was used to, of course, and she couldn't understand why I was working in the China Nook instead of up in Fort Worth in one of the big department stores.

"Why, look here," I told her one night out at the Hickory Rib, "I'm going to *be* somebody. I'll probably own that old China Nook by next Christmas, armadillo baskets and all."

Miss Euayla took a sip of her dope and just looked at me for a minute.

"How come you couldn't own one of them big stores in Fort Worth by Christmas?" she said after a while.

"That's a different thing and you know it," I told her. "Have another beef sandwich. Sometimes I think you people down here in McClellan county don't understand anything at all."

She just ate her beef sandwich and kept looking at me. Miss Euayla has the worst staring habit of any woman I ever met in my life, and that's a fact. It took me a long time to figure out she was giving me love looks instead of just looking straight through me.

But I'm telling you the honest truth, that night when Rabe Thompson hid in the car just about took ten years off my life. The next day in the China Nook my hands were shaking so bad that I knocked over a whole display of little ceramic Bibles we had piled up there for Easter gifts. They were the cutest things: they had slots in the side where the pages were so you could put money in there and save it up for Sunday school, I suppose. Anyway, Miss Clara, she owns the China Nook, you know, Miss Clara like to died when I knocked them over. I must have busted fifteen of those little Bibles all on account of that Rabe Thompson, and I told Miss Clara so.

"Ha," she said, looking at me with those little beady eyes of hers, just like a weasel looking at a crippled hen. "You better look out, Lafond T.," she said. "That Rabe Thompson's daddy has just about all the money in McClellan county and and what he don't have he knows how to lay his hands on it mighty quick," she said. Miss Clara's grammar is just awful. "On top of that," she said, all beady eyes, "they've both of 'em got about the worst tempers in Texas. Why, I can recall when Rabe's daddy was courting his mother," she said, and let off a great string of stories about all the awful things that Mr. Thompson did to boys that were trying to court his future bride at the same time he was. But I just didn't faze, no, sir.

"The pen is mightier than the sword, Miss Clara," I told her, just as chipper as you please. "Might don't always make right, you know. Nowadays a young fellow's got to have brains," I said. "B,r,a,i,n,s."

"Um, hm," Miss Clara said. "Now you sweep up them Bibles."

Honestly! I felt like telling her, Why, no, Miss Clara, I thought I'd just run the Hoover over those little busted up Bibles. Miss Clara, however, is what you might call obtuse. She has absolutely no sense of humor whatever.

Now that was probably very largely responsible for my getting to feel so blue right along in there. I got to thinking that persons that don't have any sense of humor, especially women, live forever, you know; they're the most stubborn

things about going off to their just reward that ever was. That's just a plain fact and everybody knows it. Well, here I was, embarked on a dead-end career, when I stopped to think about it.

"It's a burden," Miss Euayla said when I told her about it, but I could see she didn't really understand what I was talking about. The fact of the matter is that Miss Euayla is just the sweetest thing you ever saw for a big girl, but she's pretty short on humor. I guess having her daddy leave her all that money and having to worry about all that cotton makes her that way.

"Yes," I told her, "it is a burden," but I thought, you don't even know what a burden is, you sweet, rich thang, you. "Here I come all the way down to McClellan county from Fort Worth," I told her, "looking for my dear Uncle Dell, and he's flown off somewhere and the first career I pick out for myself, right there in the China Nook, is a big, fat dead-end."

"I declare," Miss Euayla said, taking a big bite of beef sandwich. It's a fact, you have to stoke that girl like an ocean liner.

It was the plain truth about my Uncle Dell. I had a letter from him telling me to come on down and join up with him in something good, and when I got to McClellan county all I could find out was that he'd run off somewhere in a 1929 Pierce Arrow touring sedan. Bright red. Everybody said he went to California, but he wouldn't wait for me, oh, no. Selfish, just plain selfish.

"How'm I ever going to get ahead?" I said. "I'll have to cast about for a new career."

Miss Euayla polished off her sandwich and looked at me.

"How about Rabe's daddy's compress," she said. "Maybe he'd give you a job."

Well, I laughed so hard I like to fell out of the booth.

"Me?" I said. "Lafond T. Cunningham stalking around a cotton compress, breathing all that fuzz and listening to all that racket?"

"You're afraid of Rabe," Miss Euayla said, looking around in that puzzled fashion that means she wants another beef sandwich.

"Oh, no you don't!" I hollered. "You're not going to pin that label on a Cunningham!" I told her, but she waved her hand at the waitress.

"You've no call to be afraid of Rabe," she said, looking at me again.

"Oh, no?" I said. "Not that I am, mind you, but if I don't have any call to be afraid of him, what you come running out of the house that way that night? When he hid in the car and tried to scare me into my grave, I mean."

"That was different," she said. "It was dark. It ain't dark around a compress."

Well, I just wanted to scream, or hit her over the head with that little pile of sandwich plates she had stacked in front of her.

"Isn't dark," I said. "Not *ain't*."

"All right," she said.

I could see I wasn't going to make Miss Euayla understand economics in a hurry, and I wasn't *about* to go to work in a cotton compress, and certainly not in one where Rabe Thompson could get hold of me. Like I say, I have very delicate bones, it's a part of the Cunningham style, and a cotton compress is like all hell's broken loose in an insane asylum. Noise? That's where they invented noise. I have no doubt that three or four people get killed each and every day in Texas cotton compresses. I decided maybe I'd go on the radio.

That's one nice thing you can say for the radio, it's clean work, and if you don't like the noise you can put on some of those headphone things and just look interested without even turning the thing on while you sit right in the studio where they're making the racket. I've seen them do that in the movies, you know. It's sort of like being deaf and turning down the volume on your hearing aid: that's why so many deaf people have such sweet smiles, my Uncle Dell always said, and I believe it.

Well, I called up Miss Clara on the telephone next morning and told her I had a sick headache and was going to stay in bed all day with wet teabags on my eyes. There was just a humming kind of silence for a while, and then she hung up. The rudest old party you ever ran across.

I put on my checkered suit and my black and white perforateds and strutted right on down to the radio station, carrying my guitar in a yellow pillow slip. I've had that box for years: it was left to me, but some jealous person or other stole the case a long while ago. I'm not going to name any names, you understand: whoever did it knows he did it, and I don't think the entire city of Fort Worth is big enough to hold his guilty conscience. Envy is a terrible thing.

But anyway. In the radio station there was this dangerous-looking blonde behind the counter and she let me right on in to see Mr. Big himself. When I opened the door to his office I had the pillow slip off the guitar and folded up and stuck in my pocket, and I went right into my act.

"Yes, sir!" I said, skipping through the door. "I'm the biggest little singer west of the Sabine river!" and with that I lit right into the opening of "I Want to Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young and Leave a Beautiful Memory."

Well, that man was stunned. He just sat there behind his desk looking at me, and his mouth got open wider and wider until you could have driven a team of mules through his dentures and right out again and I don't think he'd have known a thing.

Of course I hadn't been getting much exercise in the China Nook and I was breathing pretty hard when I hit the last chord. I pulled the pillow slip out of my pocket and dabbed at my face with it, at the same time giving him a stylish little bow, with the guitar flung off to one side in my left hand and my left foot out and pointed. Style! If there's one thing I know about, it's style.

"How do you like that for a starter?" I said, puffing a little, and the man closed his mouth.

"If you'd just wait in the outer office," he said, still sitting there looking at me.

"Certainly!" I cried "Make it easy on yourself!" and I did a quick off-to-Buffalo back out where the blonde was and sat down on a bench to get my breath. The air in McClellan county is as heavy as lead: you'd think you were in Death Valley all the time.

They had a radio going in there and a man was talking about the biggest discovery in the scientific world since the atom bomb, he said. I wasn't paying too much attention, but I began to make out that he was talking about Hollywood Synthetic Diamond Rings. You could send off for them, like something out of the Ivor Johnson catalogue, and they were absolutely guaranteed. Well, I surely was surprised. I started to listen pretty hard but I heard Mr. Big's voice, talking in his office over the telephone and it sounded urgent, like on Drag-net.

"He's crazy as a bedbug," I heard him say. "You better get somebody down here right away." There was a little pause and he said, "Sure, he's dangerous! You ought to see him! He looks like a June bug peeking out from behind a chrysanthemum when he starts to waving that yellow pillow case around!"

Well, I had to admit it, he was talking about me! I've never been so shocked in my life, nor so insulted. I just marched right out of there and went back to my room and sat right down and wrote off a letter to the Hollywood Synthetic Diamond people and then went down to the post office and stuck a four ninety five money order in it and mailed it. I was sick and tired of fooling around. If you ask me a person can stand just so much. The Lord helps those who helps themselves, you know, you can't just stand around hoping to get a leg up on somebody else's bootstraps, or whatever it is.

After I mailed off the letter I went back to my rooming house and changed my clothes and went out back and polished up that '33 Chevie until it squeaked when you looked at it. The finish had a shine like a raven's wing in the sunlight: a lot of the black was a little worn off on places and looked sort of bluish-black and green. Just beautiful. But of course that's just about the hardest work a man can do. I had to go upstairs and lay down for a while with a magazine. If you want a good workout, go down to McClellan county and polish a '33 Chevie some afternoon. I was too tuckered to talk.

But it passed off after I'd had my lie-down, of course. I got up and telephoned Miss Euayla.

"I'm going to have some mighty big news before long for you," I told her, in spite of the fact I wasn't too certain yet myself what it was going to be.

"What are you going to do," she said after a minute, sounding so faint and far away and distracted I could tell she was hungry and looking around her living room for something to eat. "You going to work in the compress?"

"You just stop that," I said. "Fortune might turn my way at any time, Miss Smarty. You'll see."

"All right," she mumbled with her mouth full, and hung up.

Some people just don't know destiny when it walks up and hits them in the face.

But I made it a little plainer next day. Miss Euayla came in the China Nook looking for a wedding present for some one of her cotton-headed cousins out in the country, and I fired my arrow.

"I'm going to be looking for a wedding present myself one of these days," I told her. "For my bride."

Miss Euayla looked at me, then back at the ceramic frog flower holder she was weighing in her hand.

"You can't ever tell," I said. "One of these days!"

"I think I'll send them this," Miss Euayla said, handing me the frog.

"You ought to give a party for that barefooted cousin of yours," I told her as I wrapped up the frog in a big wad of pink tissue paper. "A big engagement party of some kind."

"Mm," Miss Euayla said, blinking at me. "That's what Rabe thinks, too."

"Oh, does he!" I hollered. "Well, maybe he's got some ulterior motive or other. Me, I just like to see folks have a good time. There's little enough that's jolly in this old world."

"Mm, hm," Miss Euayla said. "That's what Rabe thinks."

"Well, then, go on and give your old party!" I said, hopping up and down a little. I was so put out I was furious, but anyway she was going to have the party and as soon as she left the China Nook I could see that was all that mattered. I have too much pride, I guess I know that as well as anybody does, and temperament, too, it just seems to go with talent.

Miss Euayla even put it in the paper about the party. She sent out little bids to it, all printed up, inviting the bearer to be present at the Fish Pond, which is the ridiculous name they have in McClellan county for that splintered old shack they call a country club. They don't even have a pond. There's nothing out there but an old stagnant ox-bow lake, and if you don't look out you can step right through the clubhouse floor and fall in the water. Society!

Well, anyway, the great day dawned, as they say in the classics. I had my plot all ready, but I was nearly taken off in a fit, waiting for the Hollywood diamond people to come through. I didn't get the package until 3 p.m., I'll have you know, and if I hadn't been right there when the postman came up the front porch steps I probably never would have gotten it. That landlady of mine was the nosiest old blister you ever saw. I just ran right by her with that package and right on up the stairs, with her hollering down at the foot, "What's that you got, Lafond? You sent off for something through the mail?"

"That's for me to know and you to find out!" I hollered back, just sassed her good, and went into my room and opened the package.

It just plain took your breath away. That Hollywood diamond was as big around as a bottle cap. I held the ring over by the window in the light and it just snapped and sparkled, just sat right up and looked you in the eye. It wasn't even cracked, after coming all the way from Hollywood, which I guess is about as far from McClellan county as a person could get without a passport. Just beautiful! I gave that diamond a good burst with some patented window cleaner I kept in there for my dresser mirror and rubbed it on my sleeve and my, heavens! you could hardly stand to look at it.

It took me the rest of the afternoon to get dressed. My checkered suit hadn't even hardly got rumpled at the radio station so I wore that and a new pink shirt I'd been saving to go off with Uncle Dell in, if he ever showed up. And my perforateds, of course: even after my radio audition they were still in A number one shape, I'm that careful of myself, you know.

So, there I was. When I came downstairs the landlady, Miss Vandy, came out to devil me some more about that package but when she saw me she was just speechless. She stared at me for a good minute without saying a thing.

"Take a good look," I told her. "You're looking at a young man on the threshold," I said. "How do you like my cravat?"

Miss Vandy swallowed a couple of times and nodded.

"You're just a picture, Lafond," she said. "Just a picture."

"That's vanadium green," I said, shaking my cravat at her.

"A beautiful necktie," she said. "Just beautiful. Are you off to a wedding?"

"No, Miss Nosey!" I said, "nor to a hanging, either!" and with that I skipped out the screen door, flip! flap! "I'll tell you when it's wedding time!" I hollered back over my shoulder.

Everybody in the world was out at the Fish Pond. Cars, you never saw so many cars, and Japanese lanterns strung up and down the veranda. There was a crowd at the water doing a lot of yelling and swearing, because of course somebody had already driven off the bank in the dark. That happens at least once every time there's a party out there. I just hoped it was Rabe Thompson, with his mouth full of live catfish.

I parked that '33 Chevie and even at night it had a shine on it from the lanterns up on the veranda. There was not a thing in the world about that car to be ashamed of. I closed the door gently just to hear the sound: I had the insides of the doors sprayed with asphalt up in Fort Worth. There's a place up there that does things like that and the man who runs it told me that's what they do on all those big new cars in Detroit. It's quite the thing, he said, and it surely gives the door a nice tone when it shuts: expensive.

I tiptoed up to the veranda, trying to keep my perforateds from getting absolutely soaked by the dew, because they either have dew in McClellan county at night or frost. It's always one or the other and of course all that moisture just plays hob with two-tone shoes. I finally got up to the door, bent over and gave my footgear a quick flick with my hand-

kerchief and then flew into the ballroom, skipping for all I was worth.

"Where's that lucky couple!" I hollered, skipping through that great roil of people like a fresh breeze. I could see Miss Euayla's hat sticking up away over yonder in the corner where they keep the nickelodeon so I just bent my course in that direction and pretty soon I busted out of the dancers right in front of her.

She had one of those little canvas sacks in her hand that you use to take the money to the bank in, and she was fishing nickels out of it and stuffing them into the music box. They never seem to be able to put the vendor on automatic down there, somebody has to stand there and feed it, and usually it's the hostess. Just no *savoir faire* in the whole county. That's French.

"My dear madame," I said, giving her that deep bow of mine, foot pointed, arm flung out to one side, the whole works. "*You are the sweetest thang*," I said, "and you are mine tonight!"

"Hello, Lafond," Miss Euayla said, looking up from that grubby sackful of nickels. She looked at me, just taking me in for a minute. "Where'd you get that necktie?" she said finally.

"This is a cravat," I told her. "When you pay two and a half for a necktie, it's a cravat. Vanadium green," I told her. "That's a mineral color."

"Mm, hm," she said. "It looks more like a vegetable color. Kind of spinach."

"Just rave on, my girl," I told her, haughty as could be, "just enjoy yourself. You are looking at a man of the world, that's all, if you only had sense enough to see it. Fortune has finally smiled."

"Mm, hm," Miss Euayla said. "What'd you do, get another job?"

"Job!" I cried. "You are looking at a Cunningham of independent means. I just got the word today."

"Word?" Miss Euayla looked at that sack of nickels, then back at me. I could tell I had her curiosity up or she'd have gone on fishing out nickels.

"About my Uncle Dell," I said. "That poor, rich man. He's had a terrible accident in that big red Pierce Arrow of his, out in Hollywood. Ran into some big movie star or other and killed them both outright. I forget the other fellow's name."

"For heaven's sake," she said.

"Just awful," I said, "and now he's left me so much money I don't know what to do with it. Probably be even more cash later. I'm going to sue that other fellow's estate, of course."

"Is that a fact," Miss Euayla said, looking at me.

Well, it could have been, you know. The important thing in this life is to think big, if you want to be big. Of course I knew the time would have to come when I'd be bound to explain a few things to Miss Euayla, but that would be after we were welded together in the sanctity of marriage.

"Just rich as a black marketeer," I told her. "And look here what I got you today," and I hauled that big sparkler out of my pocket and slipped it on her finger before you could say scat.

"What on earth," Miss Euayla said, while I shoved and pushed on that ring until we both of us like to fell crash into the juke box. The ring was too little to go on her ring finger, I finally saw that after huffing and puffing around for a while, so I put it on her little finger, but it wouldn't go there, either. Honestly! You can't trust anybody at all, not even the diamond trust. I shoved it back on her ring finger but it stuck out there on the first joint, just wouldn't go past that first knuckle.

While all that was going on Miss Euayla forgot to keep stuffing that music box with nickels and it was good and quiet when I stepped back from her and made my announcement.

"There!" I said, flinging out my arms like I was on a stage. "You are bound to Lafond T. Cunningham for life, you big sweet thang, you!" but there was a kind of a roar behind my back.

I looked around and here came Rabe Thompson, roaring like a wounded mastodon, all covered with mud from trying to get some fool's car out of the water, just dripping and

squishing across the dance floor like a creature from out of the wet past.

"No, you ain't!" he trumpeted at Miss Euayla. "You ain't bound to nobody but me!" and he commenced to fumbling in his pockets with those muddy hams of his until he finally dredged out a little blue box no bigger than a carbuncle and snapped it open in front of Miss Euayla's face.

Well, it was just laughable. There was a little bitty old ring in there, sort of gold colored with a stone in it about the size of the head on a kitchen match.

"Now, look at that!" I said, striking a pose with my hands on my hips. "Did you ever see such a piker? Just you take a good big fat look at that ring I just slipped on that girl's finger!" I told him, and he did.

"I ain't going to stand for it!" he roared in that big undignified voice of his, and he grabbed my ring off Miss Euayla's finger tip and hurled it, just hurled it, down on the floor.

Now, a lot of people wouldn't believe this, but it's just the kind of luck I had up there in McClellan county all the time. That diamond ring just exploded when it hit the floor, just flew into a million pieces and scattered all over. We all just stood there for a second, and then Rabe Thompson let out a great bellow.

"That ain't no diamond ring!" he shouted at Miss Euayla. "He's trying to take advantage of you just like I said he would! He's after your cotton!" and he made a grab for me, but I slipped away just as nimble as you please and went running for the door. Just before I took off I noticed the strangest thing: Miss Euayla had a big fat grin on her face and I don't believe she was paying any attention at all. Isn't that the most peculiar thing you ever heard of in your entire life?

But I didn't have time to think about it, I just made for the door, with Rabe Thompson right after me.

"You're a liar!" I told him over my shoulder. We went through that door like the locomotive and the coal car on the Bluebonnet Special, both of us yelling for all we were worth. I don't recall hearing Miss Euayla's voice at all.

It was quite a chase, just like something in the first part of a

a Doug Fairbanks picture, with me playing Doug Fairbanks, of course. Up hill, down dale, hither and thither, you might say, just screaming through the night.

Well, I finally shook him on the edge of town and doubled back out to the Fish Pond and got my car. I didn't even bother to go back to my rooming house to pick up my things. There's no telling what an animal type like that Rabe Thompson might do, you know: just watch him any afternoon in the week, swaggering around down on the square in his Daddy's pickup truck. No, sir, I just headed straight south and here I am.

I've been here in Galveston two weeks now, with this *very* pleasant job handing out bathing suits in Murdoch's Swimming Pavillion, and any day now I'm going to contact Miss Euayla for the good news. She doesn't know my exact whereabouts, you understand, or of course she'd have gotten in touch already. I just know she's going to tell me she's run that Rabe Thompson off for good and that she wants me to hop right back up there, quick as a wink. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, you know, and my style just shows off even better this way, at this point in time, sort of aloof and withdrawn down here on the edge of this dirty old Gulf of Mexico, just sending off an occasional little love note up there to McClellan County. And there's no two ways about it, most of those cotton-heads up there never even heard of the Gulf of Mexico, much less ever saw it, and I just leave it to you to guess how glamorous that old Galveston postmark will look to Miss Euayla. Just one of those little things, but you add them all up and you've got style, and that's just me, Lafond T. Cunningham.

THREE POEMS

by MALCOLM LOWRY

COMFORT

You are not the first man to have the shakes,
the wheels, the horrors, to wear the scarlet
snowshoe, nor yet the invincible harlot
dogged by eyes like fishnets. Leaning, aches
the iron face with agate eyes, and wakes
the guardian angel, sees the past
a parthenon of possibilities...
You are not the first man to be caught lying,
nor to be told that you are dying.

MERCY OF FIRE

But never fall from fealty to light,
You said, Melville? Now, by God, sir, why not?
The pall is comfortable enough; as soon rot
There as another place; once being well met,
The beauty of the dark is there's no sight
Of that light you speak of! What lamps are lit
Save no falling from fealty to it
When once accepted wholly by the night.
It is a treachery to the powers of hell
To refrain as you suggest; is a treason
Against the inferno whose judgments well
Fit the crime; whose mercy is tempered
With fire — light enough for those unhampered
By day. And true to unreason.

DEATH OF A OAXAQUENIAN

So huge is God's despair
In the wild cactus plain
I heard Him weeping there

That I might venture where
The peon had been slain
So huge is God's despair

On the polluted air
Twixt noonday and the rain
I heard Him weeping there

And felt His anguish tear
For refuge in my brain
So huge is God's despair

That it could find a lair
In one so small and vain
I heard Him weeping there

Oh vaster than our share
Than deserts of new Spain
So huge is God's despair
I heard Him weeping there...



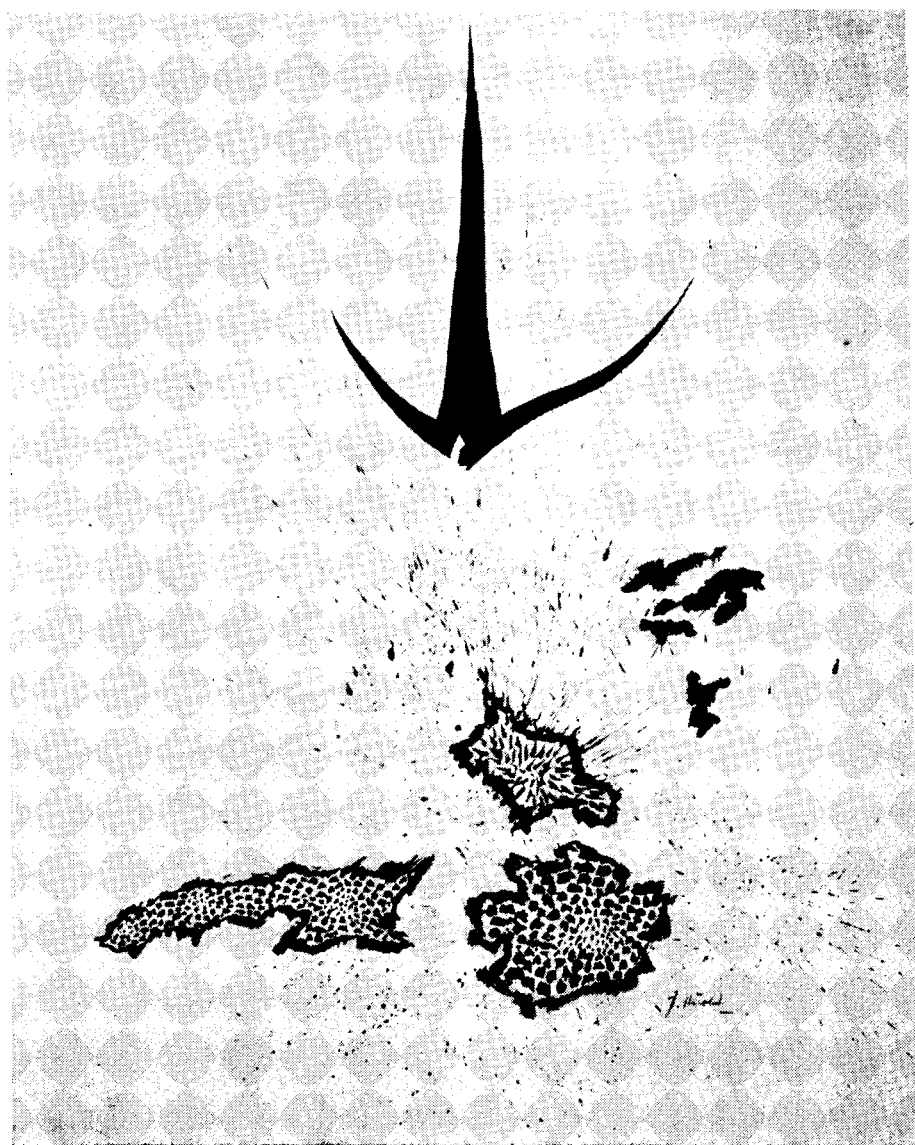
Jacques Hérold

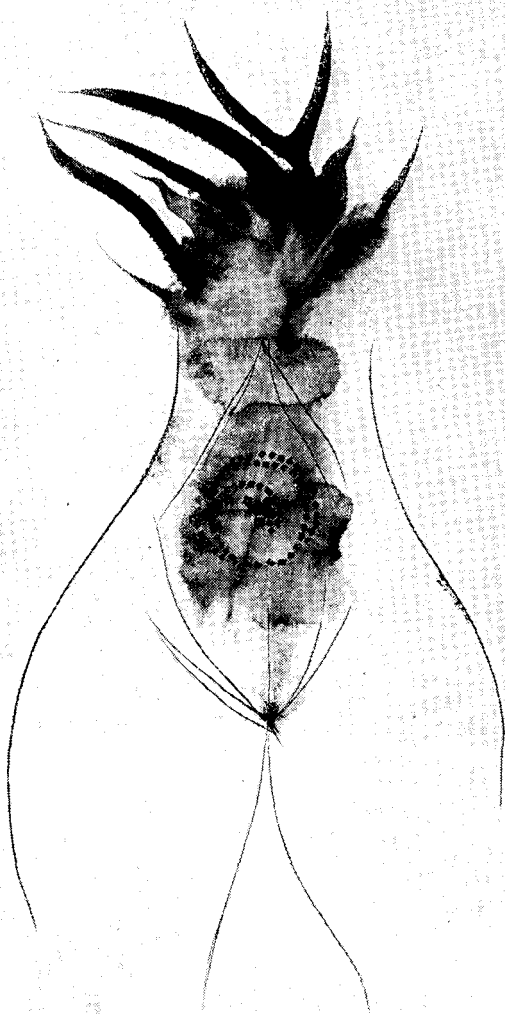
Peoples beset by hordes of invaders take to inaccessible mountains; later, when peace is restored, they come down again into the plains, bringing back with them the traditions. Fleeing from abstraction, the image has taken refuge on the unreal peaks of the imagination, where the Surrealists watch over it. Some day, it will perhaps find its way down again into reality. And among those who will have made this perilous descent easier, Jacques Hérold will occupy a choice place.

Born at Piatra, in Roumania, in 1910, he arrived in Paris in 1930. Here, he was submitted to the influence of André Breton. Whatever his later changes, he will remain one of those painters for whom poetry is essential—an affinity instanced by his illustrations for the works of Francis Ponge, Julien Gracq, and the Marquis de Sade. He himself is the author of a *Mistreatise of Painting* where metaphor sharpens into maxim. Unlike the Surrealists, however, he does not look for strangeness *elsewhere* than in things, but *in* things. All that is needed is to strip them of their banal envelope. Hérold skins objects, creatures, even the air around us. At once are revealed mysterious microcosms where crystals gravitate. Crystals and gravitation, perfection and motion, violence and elegance: in their alliance lies Hérold's personality.

In recent years, a kind of fermentation gradually permeates his work. The precise line has given way to broad strokes, the brush has taken over from the pen. It is like a passing from the mineral to the vegetable kingdom. The crystal turns into seed, and the seed germinates, swells, explodes, is lavished. Its encounter with a temperament keenly aware of purely pictorial categories—space, light—has led the fantastic image back to earth, and both are fecundated.

—PIERRE SCHNEIDER













TWO POEMS by JAMES WRIGHT

LYING IN A HAMMOCK AT A FRIEND'S FARM IN PINE ISLAND, MINNESOTA

Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly,
Asleep on the black trunk,
Blowing like a leaf in green shadow.
Down the ravine behind Duffy's empty house,
The cowbells follow one another
Into the distances of the afternoon.
To my right,
In a field of sunlight between two pines,
The droppings of last year's horses
Blaze up into golden stones.
I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on.
A chicken-hawk floats over, looking for home.
I have wasted my life.

HOW MY FEVER LEFT

I can still hear her.
She hobbles downstairs to the kitchen.
She is swearing at the dishes.
She slaps her grease-rags
Into a basket,
And slings it over her skinny forearm, crooked
With hatred, and stomps outside.
I can hear my father downstairs,
Standing without a coat in the open back door,
Calling to the old bat across the snow.
She's forgotten her black shawl,
But I see her through my window, sneering,
Flapping upward
Toward some dark church on the hill.
She has to meet somebody else, and
It's no use, she won't listen,
She's gone.

Move to
left

Zoffen, Kodaly, Feltz, Music of Hungary
 100 pp. Barnes & Noble, N.Y. at \$
 Times Lit Supplement Feb. 1 - 1966
 Eric Salzman: NY Times, Jan 9, 1961, Beethoven's
Concerto his "he would not accept"; Scriabin, Strav
Lopau 205 and 283, Schumann, Dvořák, Mendel-
sohn Op 6 and Chopin, Brahms, Strauss Op 58
Debussy Schubert, Wagner, Werk Beethoven Haydn Mozart
eg. Tchaikovsky and Elgar Movements... Series of piano and
Shops that gave right out of the Musical.

3

"In a house", Yul answers. His neat cloth hat has nothing like the glitter ~~that~~ reflected on the face of milkweed-eared brown dominating a ~~petal~~ place ~~place~~ in those hells devoid of solace ~~that was nothing like the place~~ where he is now. His deliberate pace

displaced but not deterred ~~from~~
listened to by me - ~~I~~ ^{nevertheless} ~~though with detachment~~ ^{detachedly} ~~then~~ -

1.

Magic bird with multiple tongue -
 five tongues - ^{eng. food for} ~~embarked on~~ ^{middle} a crazy twelve-month tramp
 (or plod), he flew among
 the damned, & found each camp

2

No new "big rear"; no distress.
He can sing ¹⁴⁴ ~~twinned~~ with an enchantress -
elephant-borne ¹⁴⁵ ~~early~~ with blue sequined-spangled dress -
¹⁴⁶ ~~buried~~ aloft by trunk, with star-tipped wand, ¹⁴⁷ ~~remains~~ ¹⁴⁸ ~~remains~~

A page of manuscript from a recent poem by Marianne Moore.



Hildegard Watson

THE ART OF POETRY IV

MARIANNE MOORE

American poetry is a great literature, and it has only come to its maturity in the last forty years; Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson in the last century were rare examples of genius isolated in a hostile environment. One decade gave America the major figures of our modern poetry: Wallace Stevens was born in 1879, and T. S. Eliot in 1888. To the ten years which these dates enclose belong H. D., Robinson Jeffers, John Crowe Ransom, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound and Marianne Moore.

Marianne Moore, surely the leading woman in modern American literature, began to publish during the First World war. She was printed and praised in Europe by the expatriates T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. In Chicago Harriet Monroe's magazine *Poetry*, which provided the enduring showcase for the new poetry, published her too. But she was mainly a poet

of New York, of the Greenwich Village group which created magazines called *Others* and *Broom*. The poets with whom she was mostly associated were Alfred Kreymbourg, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens—Stateside representatives of the miraculous generation.

Marianne Moore has settled not in Bloomsbury or Rapallo but in Brooklyn. She moved there from the Village in 1929, into the apartment house where she still lives. To visit her you cross Brooklyn Bridge, turn left at Myrtle Avenue, follow the elevated for a mile or two, and then turn right onto her street. It is pleasantly lined with a few trees, and Miss Moore's apartment is conveniently near a grocery store and the Presbyterian church which she attends.

The interview took place in November 1960, the day before the election. The front door of Miss Moore's apartment opens onto a long narrow corridor. Rooms lead off to the right, and at the end of the corridor is a large sitting room which overlooks the street. On top of a bookcase which ran the length of the corridor was a Nixon button.

Miss Moore and the interviewer sat in her sitting room, a microphone between them. Piles of books stood everywhere. On the walls hung a variety of paintings. One came from Mexico, a gift of Mabel Dodge; others were examples of the heavy, tea-colored oils which Americans hung in the years before 1914. The furniture was old-fashioned and dark.

Miss Moore spoke with an accustomed scrupulosity, and with a humor which her readers will recognize. When she ended a sentence with a phrase which was particularly telling, or even tart, she glanced quickly at the interviewer to see if he was amused, and then snickered gently. Later Miss Moore took the interviewer to an admirable lunch at a nearby restaurant. She decided not to wear her Nixon button because it clashed with her coat and hat.

INTERVIEWER

I understand that you were born in St. Louis only about ten months before T. S. Eliot. Did your families know each other?

MOORE

No, we did not know the Eliots. We lived in Kirkwood, Missouri, where my grandfather was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. T. S. Eliot's grandfather—Dr. William Eliot—was a Unitarian. We left when I was about seven, my grandfather having died in 1894, February 20th. My grandfather like Dr. Eliot had attended ministerial meetings in St. Louis. Also, at stated intervals, various ministers met for luncheon. After one of these luncheons my grandfather said, "When Dr. William Eliot asks the blessing and says, 'and this we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' he is Trinitarian enough for me." The Mary Institute, for girls, was endowed by him as a memorial to his daughter Mary, who had died.

INTERVIEWER

How old were you when you started to write poems?

MOORE

Well, let me see, in Bryn Mawr, I think. I was eighteen when I entered Bryn Mawr. I was born in 1887, I entered college in 1906. Now how old would I have been? Can you deduce my probable age?

INTERVIEWER

Eighteen or nineteen.

MOORE

I had no literary plans, but I was interested in the undergraduate monthly magazine, and to my surprise I wrote one or two little things for it and the editors elected me to the board. It was my sophomore year, I am sure it was, and I stayed on, I believe. And then when I had left college I offered contributions (we weren't paid) to *The Lantern*, the alumnae magazine. But I didn't feel that my product was anything to shake the world.

INTERVIEWER

At what point did poetry become world-shaking for you?

MOORE

Never!... I believe I was more interested in painting then. At least I said so. I remember Mrs. Otis Skinner saying at Commencement time, the year I was graduated, "What would you like to be?"

"A painter," I said.

"Well, I'm not surprised," Mrs. Skinner answered. I had something on that she liked, some kind of summer dress. She commended it and said, "Well, I'm not at all surprised."

I like stories. I like fiction. And—this sounds rather pathetic and bizarre—I think my verse perhaps is the next best thing to it. Didn't I write something one time, "Part of a Poem, Part of a Novel, Part of a Play"? I think that was all too truthful. I could visualize scenes, and deplored the fact that Henry James had to do it unchallenged.

Now if I couldn't write fiction, I'd like to write plays. In fact, the theatre is the most pleasant, in fact my favorite form of recreation...

INTERVIEWER

Do you go often?

MOORE

No. Never. Unless someone invites me. Lillian Hellman invited me to *Toys in the Attic*, and I am very happy that she did. I would have had no notion of the vitality of the thing and her skill as a writer, if I hadn't gone to the play. I would like to go again. The accuracy of the vernacular! It's enviable. That's the kind of thing I am interested in. I'm always noting down little local expressions and accents. I think I should be in some philological operation or enterprise. I am so very much interested in dialects and intonations. I don't think any of that comes into my so-called poems at all.

INTERVIEWER

I wonder what Bryn Mawr meant for you as a poet. You write that most of your time there was spent in the biological laboratories. Did you like biology better than literature as a subject for study? Did the training possibly affect your poetry?

MOORE

Did laboratory studies affect my poetry? I am sure they did. I found the biology courses—minor, major and histology—exhilarating. I thought, in fact, of studying medicine. Precision, economy of statement, logic employed to ends that are disinterested, drawing and identifying, liberate—at least have some bearing on—the imagination, it seems to me.

INTERVIEWER

Did moving to New York, and the stimulation of the writers you found there lead you to write more poems than you would otherwise have written?

MOORE

I'm sure it did—seeing what others wrote, liking this or that. With me it's always some fortuity that traps me. I certainly never intended to write poetry. It never came into my head to think of it. And now, too, I think each time I write that it may be the last time; then something takes my fancy. Everything I have written is the result of reading or of interest in people, I'm sure of that. I had no ambitions to be a writer.

INTERVIEWER

Let me see. You taught at the Carlisle Indian School, after Bryn Mawr. Then after you moved to New York in 1918 you taught at a private school and worked in a library. Did these occupations have anything to do with you as a writer?

MOORE

I think they hardened my muscles considerably, my mental approach to things. Working as a librarian was a big help, a tremendous help. Miss Leonard of the Hudson Park branch of the New York Public Library opposite our house came to see me one day. I wasn't in, and she asked my mother if she thought I would care to be on the staff, work in the library, because I was so fond of books and liked to talk about them to people. My mother said no, she thought not; the shoemaker's children never have shoes, I probably would feel if I

joined the staff that I had no time to read. When I came home she told me, and I said, "Why, certainly. I'll tell her that would be ideal!" Only I wouldn't work more than half a day. If I had worked all day and maybe evenings or overtime, like the mechanics, why it would not have been ideal.

As a free service we were assigned books to review and I did like that. We didn't get paid but we had the chance to diagnose. I revelled in that. Somewhere I believe I have carbon copies of those "P-slip" summaries. They were the kind of things that brought the worst-best out. I was always wondering why they didn't honor me with an art book or medical book or even a history, or criticism. But no, it was fiction, silent movie fiction.

INTERVIEWER

Did you travel at this time? Did you go to Europe at all?

MOORE

In 1911. My mother and I went to England for about two months, July and August probably. We went to Paris and we stayed on the left bank, in a pension on the rue Valette, where Calvin wrote his *Institutes*, I believe. Not far from the Panthéon and the Luxembourg Gardens. I have been quite interested in seeing Sylvia Beach's book, and reading about Ezra Pound and his Paris days. Where was I and what was I doing? I think, with the objective of an evening stroll—it was one of the hottest summers the world has ever known, 1911—we walked along to 12, rue L'Odéon, to see Sylvia Beach's shop. It wouldn't occur to me to say, "Here am I, I'm a writer, would you talk to me awhile?" I had no feeling at all about anything like that. I wanted to observe things. And we went to every museum in Paris, I think, except two.

INTERVIEWER

Have you been back since?

MOORE

Not to Paris. Only in England in 1935 or 1936. I like England.

INTERVIEWER

You have mostly stayed put in Brooklyn, then, since you moved here in 1929?

MOORE

Except for four trips to the West: Los Angeles, San Francisco, and British Columbia. My mother and I went through the canal previously, to San Francisco, and by rail to Seattle.

INTERVIEWER

Have you missed the Dodgers here, since *they* went West?

MOORE

Very much and I am told that they miss us.

INTERVIEWER

I am still interested in those early years in New York. William Carlos Williams, in his *Autobiography*, says that you were "a rafter holding up the superstructure of our uncompleted building," when he talks about the Greenwich Village group of writers. I guess these were people who contributed to *Others*.

MOORE

I never was a rafter holding up anyone! I have his *Autobiography* and took him to task for his misinformed statements about Robert McAlmon and Bryher. In my indignation I missed some things I ought to have seen.

INTERVIEWER

To what extent did the *Others* contributors form a group?

MOORE

We did forgather quite a little. Alfred Kreymbourg was editor, and was married to Gertrude Lord at the time, one of the loveliest persons I have ever met. And they had a little apartment somewhere in the Village. There was considerable unanimity about that group.

INTERVIEWER

Someone called Alfred Kreymbourg your American discoverer. Do you suppose this is true?

MOORE

Perhaps it *could* be said; he did all he could to promote me. Miss Monroe and the Aldingtons had asked me simultaneously to contribute to *Poetry* and *The Egoist* in 1917, practically at the same time. Alfred Kreymbourg was not inhibited. I was a little different from the others. He thought I might pass as a novelty, I guess.

INTERVIEWER

What was your reaction when H.D. and Bryher brought out your first collection, which they called *Poems*, in 1921 without your knowledge? Why had you delayed to do it yourself?

MOORE

To issue my slight product—conspicuously tentative—seemed to me premature. I disliked the term “poetry” for any but Chaucer’s or Shakespeare’s or Dante’s. I no longer feel my original instinctive hostility to the word, since it’s a convenient, almost unavoidable term for the thing—although hardly for me:—my observations, experiments in rhythm, or exercises in composition. What I write, as I have said before, could only be called poetry because there is no other category in which to put it. For the chivalry of the undertaking—issuing my verse for me in 1921, certainly in format choicer than in content—I am intensely grateful. Again, in 1925, it seemed to me not very judicious of Faber and Faber, and simultaneously of the Macmillan Company, to propose a *Selected Poems* for me. Desultory occasional magazine publications seemed to me sufficient and plenty conspicuous.

INTERVIEWER

Had you been sending poems to magazines before *The Egoist* printed your first poem?

MOORE

I must have. I have a little curio, a little wee book about 2" by 3", or 2½", by 3", in which I systematically entered everything sent out, when I got it back, if they took it, and how much I got for it. That lasted about a year, I think. I can't care as much as all that. I don't know that I submitted anything that wasn't extorted from me.

I have at present three onerous tasks, and one interferes with the other, and I don't know how I am going to write anything. If I get a promising idea I set it down, and let it stay there. I don't make myself do anything with it. I've had several things in *The New Yorker*. And I said to them, "I might never write again," and not to expect me to. Oh, I never knew anyone who had a passion for words who had as much difficulty in saying things as I do. I very seldom say them in a manner I like. If I do it's because I don't know I'm trying. I've written several things for *The New Yorker*—and I did want to write them.

INTERVIEWER

When did you last write a poem?

MOORE

It appeared in August. What was it about? Oh,... Carnegie Hall. You see, anything that really rouses me...

INTERVIEWER

How does a poem start for you?

MOORE

A felicitous phrase springs to mind—or a word or two, say—simultaneous usually with some thought or object of equal attraction: "Its leaps should be *set*/to the flageolet": "Kattydid-wing subdivided by *sun*/till the nettings are legion." I like light rhymes, inconspicuous rhymes and unpompous conspicuous rhymes: Gilbert and Sullivan:

*and yet when someone's near
we manage to appear*

*as impervious to fear
as anybody here.*

I have a passion for rhythm and accent, and so blundered into versifying. I consider the stanza the unit, and thus came to hazard hyphens at the end of the line. I found that readers think of the hyphen and are distracted from the content, so I try not to use hyphens.

My interest in La Fontaine originated entirely independent of content. I then fell a prey to that surgical kind of courtesy of his.

*I fear that appearances are worshipped throughout France
Whereas pre-eminence perchance
Merely means a pushing person.*

I like the unaccented syllable and nearly accented near-rhyme:

*By love and his blindness
Possibly a service was done,
Let lovers say. A lonely man has no criterion.*

INTERVIEWER

What in your reading or your background led you to write the way you do write? Was imagism a help to you?

MOORE

No. I wondered why anyone would adopt the term.

INTERVIEWER

The descriptiveness of your poems has nothing to do with them, you think?

MOORE

No; I really don't. I was rather sorry to be a pariah, or at least that I had no connection with anything. But I *did* feel gratitude to *Others*.

INTERVIEWER

Where do you think your style of writing came from?

Was it gradual accumulation, out of your character? Or does it have literary antecedents?

MOORE

Not so far as I know. Ezra Pound said, "Someone has been reading La Forge, and French authors." Well, sad to say, I had not read any of them until fairly recently. Retroactively I see that Francis Jammes' titles and treatment are a good deal like my own. I seem almost a plagiarist.

INTERVIEWER

And the extensive use of quotations?

MOORE

I was just trying to be honorable and not to steal things. I've always felt that if a thing has been said in the very best way, how can you say it better? If I wanted to say something and somebody had said it ideally, then I'd take it but give the person credit for it. That's all there is to that. If you are charmed by an author, I think it's a very strange and invalid imagination that doesn't love to share it. Somebody else should read it, don't you think?

INTERVIEWER

Did any prose stylists help you in finding your poetic style? Elizabeth Bishop mentions Poe's prose, in connection with your writing, and you have always made people think of Henry James.

MOORE

Prose stylists, very much. Doctor Johnson on Richard Savage: "He was in two months illegitimated by the Parliament, and disowned by his mother, doomed to poverty and obscurity, and launched upon the ocean of life only that he might be swallowed by its quicksands, or dashed upon its rocks... it was his peculiar happiness that he scarcely ever found a stranger whom he did not leave a friend; but it must likewise be added that, he had not often a friend long without obliging him to become a stranger." Or Edmund Burke on

the colonies: "You can shear a wolf; but will he comply?" Or Sir Thomas Browne: "States are not governed by Ergotisms." He calls a bee, "that industrious flie," and his home, his "hive." His manner is a kind of erudition-proof sweetness. Or Sir Francis Bacon: "Civil war is like the heat of fever; a foreign war is like the heat of exercise." Or Cellini: "I had by me a dog black as a mulberry... I swelled up in my rage like an asp." Or Caesar's *Commentaries*, and Xenophon's *Cynegeticus*: the gusto and interest in every detail! In Henry James it is the essays and letters especially that affect me. In Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*: his definiteness, his indigenously unmistakable accent. Charles Norman says in his biography, *Ezra Pound*, that Pound said to a poet: "nothing, nothing, that you couldn't in some circumstance, under stress of some emotion, *actually say*." And Ezra said of Shakespeare and Dante: "Here we are with the masters; of neither can we say, 'he is the greater'; of each we must say, 'he is unexcelled.'"

INTERVIEWER

Do you have in your own work any favorites and unfavorites?

MOORE

Indeed, I do. I think the most difficult thing for me is to be satisfactorily lucid, yet have enough implication in it to suit myself. That's a problem. And I don't approve of my "enigmas," or as somebody said, "the not ungreen grass."

I said to my mother one time, "How did you ever permit me to let this be printed?"

And she said, "You didn't ask my advice."

INTERVIEWER

Do you go for criticism to your family or friends?

MOORE

Well, not friends, but my brother if I get a chance. When my mother said, "You didn't ask my advice," must have been years ago, because when I wrote "A Face," I had written something first about "the adder and the child

with a bowl of porridge," and she said, "Well, it won't do."

"All right," I said, "but I have to produce something." Cyril Connolly had asked me for something for *Horizon*. So I wrote "A Face." That is one of the few things I ever set down and it didn't give me any trouble. And she said, "I like it." I remember that.

Then, much before that, I wrote "The Buffalo." I thought it would probably outrage a number of persons because it had to me a kind of pleasing jerky progress. I thought, "Well, if it seems bad my brother will tell me, and if it has any point he'll detect it."

And he said, with a considerable gusto, "It takes my fancy." I was happy as could be.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever suppress anything because of family objections?

MOORE

Yes, "the adder and the child with a bowl of porridge." I never even wanted to improve it.

You know, Mr. Saintsbury said that Andrew Lang wanted him to contribute something on Poe, and he did, and Lang returned it. He said, "Once a thing has been rejected, I never would offer it to the most different of editors." Well, that shocked me. Why I have offered a thing, submitted it thirty-five times. Not simultaneously of course.

INTERVIEWER

A poem?

MOORE

Yes. I am very tenacious.

INTERVIEWER

Do people ever ask you to write poems for them?

MOORE

Oh, continually. Everything from on the death of a dog to a little item for an album.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever write them?

MOORE

Once when I was in the library we gave a party for Miss Leonard, and I wrote a line or two of doggerel about a bouquet of violets we gave her. It has no life or point. It's inert. It was meant well but it didn't amount to anything. Then in college, I had a sonnet as an assignment. The epitome of weakness.

INTERVIEWER

I'm interested in asking about the principles, and the methods, of your way of writing. What is the rationale behind syllabic verse? How does it differ from free verse in which the line length is controlled visually but not arithmetically?

MOORE

It never occurred to me that what I wrote was something to define. I am governed by the pull of the sentence as the pull of a fabric is governed by gravity. I like the end-stopped line and dislike the reversed order of words.

INTERVIEWER

How do you plan the shape of your stanzas? I am thinking of the poems, usually syllabic, which employ a repeated stanza form. Do you ever experiment with shapes before you write, by drawing lines on a page?

MOORE

Never, I never "plan" a stanza. Words cluster like chromosomes, determining the procedure. I may influence an arrangement or thin it, then try to have successive stanzas identical with the first. Spontaneous initial originality—say, impetus—seems difficult to reproduce consciously later. As Stravinsky said about pitch: "If I transpose it for some reason, I am in danger of losing the freshness of first contact and

will have difficulty in recapturing its attractiveness.”

No, I never “draw lines.” I make a rhyme conspicuous to me at a glance, by underlining with red, blue, or other pencil—as many colors as I have rhymes to differentiate. However, if the phrases recur in too incoherent an architecture—as print—I notice that the words as a tune do not sound right.

I may start a piece, find it obstructive, lack a way out, and not complete the thing for a year, or years. I am thrifty. I salvage anything promising and set it down in a small notebook.

INTERVIEWER

I wonder if the act of translating La Fontaine’s *Fables* helped you as a writer?

MOORE

Indeed it did. It was the best help I’ve ever had. I suffered frustration. I’m so naive, so docile, and I *tend* to take anybody’s word for anything the person says, even in matters of art. The publisher who had commissioned the *Fables* died. I had no publisher. Well, I struggled on for a time and it didn’t go very well. I thought, well I’ll ask if they don’t want to terminate the contract. Then I’ll offer it elsewhere. I thought Macmillan, who took such an interest in me, would like it. And the editor there in charge of translations said, “Well, I studied French at Cornell, took a degree in French. I love French, and—well, I think I would put it away for a while, about ten years. And besides, it will hurt your own work. You won’t be able to write yourself.”

“Oh,” I said, “that’s one reason I was undertaking it. I thought it would train me, assist me, give me incentive.”

“Oh no, you won’t be able to write anything of your own.”

I was most dejected by this, and said, “Tell me what’s wrong? Are the meanings not sound or the rhythms?”

“Well, there are conflicts.” And the editor reiterated, many times, “There are conflicts.” And I yet don’t know what they are or were. A little editorial, I think.

I said, “Don’t write me a letter extenuating the return of

them. Just send the material in the envelope I put with it." I had submitted it in January and this was May. And I had had a kind of uneasy hope that all would be well. Meanwhile I had volumes, hours, and years of work yet to do and I might as well go on and do it, I had thought. To have this ultimatum was devastating.

At the same time Monroe Engle of the Viking Press wrote to me and said that he had supposed I had a commitment for my *Fables*, but if I hadn't would I let the Viking Press see them? I feel an everlasting gratitude to him.

However I said, "I can't offer you something when somebody else thinks it isn't fit to print. I would have to have someone to stabilize it and guarantee that the meanings are sound."

And Mr. Engle said, "Who do you think could do that? Whom would you like?"

And I said, "Well, Harry Levin," because he had written a very shrewd review of Edna St. Vincent Millay's and George Dillon's translation of Baudelaire. I admired the finesse of that review.

Mr. Engle said, "I'll ask him. But you won't hear for a long time. He's very busy. And how much do you think we ought to offer him?"

"Well," I said, "not less than ten dollars a book, and there wouldn't be any incentive in it, to undertake the bother of it, if he weren't given twenty."

"Oh," he said, "that will reduce your royalties, supposing we gave you an advance."

I said, "I don't want an advance, I don't want even to consider it."

"Well," he said, "that is like you."

And then Harry Levin said, right away, that he would be glad to do it as a refreshment against the chores of the term. It was a very dubious refreshment, let me tell you. He is precise without being abusive, and did not "resign."

INTERVIEWER

I've been asking you about your poems, which is of course

what interests me most. But you were editor of the *Dial*, too, and I want to ask you a few things about that. You were editor from 1926 until it ended in 1929, I think. How did you first come to be associated with it?

MOORE

Let me see. I think I took the initiative, I sent the editors a couple of things and they sent them back. And Lola Ridge had a party—she had a large apartment on a ground floor somewhere—and John Reed and Marsden Hartley, who was very confident with the brush, and Scofield Thayer, editor of the *Dial*, were there. And much to my disgust, we were induced to read something we had written. And Scofield Thayer said of my piece, “Would you send that to us at the *Dial*?”

“I did send it,” I said.

And he said, “Well, send it again.” That’s how it began, I think. Then he said, one time, “I’d like you to meet my partner, Sibley Watson,” and I invited him to tea at 152 W. 13th St. I thought Dr. Watson very deep—rare. He said nothing but what he did say was striking and the significance would creep over you as being extremely unanticipated. And they asked me to join the staff at *The Dial*.

INTERVIEWER

I have just been looking at that magazine, the years when you edited it. It’s an incredible magazine.

MOORE

The Dial? There were some good things in it, weren’t there?

INTERVIEWER

Yes. It combined George Saintsbury and Ezra Pound in the same issue. How do you account for it? What made it so good?

MOORE

Lack of fear, for one thing. We didn’t care what other people said. I never knew a magazine which was so self-

propulsive. Everybody liked what he was doing, and if we made grievous mistakes we were sorry but we laughed over them.

INTERVIEWER

Louise Bogan said that *The Dial* made clear “the obvious division between American *avant-garde* and American conventional writing.” Do you think this kind of division continues or has continued? Was this in any way a deliberate policy?

MOORE

I think that individuality was the great thing. We were not conforming to anything. We certainly didn’t have a policy, except I remember hearing the word “intensity” very often. A thing must have an “intensity.” That seemed to be the criterion.

The thing applied to it, I think, that should apply to your own writing. As George Grosz said, at that last meeting he attended at the National Institute, “How did I come to be an artist? Endless curiosity, observation, research—and a great amount of joy in the thing.” It was a matter of taking a liking to things. Things that were in accordance with your taste. I think that was it. And we didn’t care how unhomogeneous they might seem. And didn’t Aristotle say that it is the mark of a poet to see resemblances between apparently incongruous things! There was any amount of incentive about it.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think there is anything in the change of literary life in America that would make the *Dial* different if it existed today under the same editors? Were there any special conditions in the twenties that made the literary life of America different?

MOORE

I think it is always about the same.

INTERVIEWER

I wonder if it had survived into the thirties if it might have made that rather dry literary decade a little better?

MOORE

I certainly think so. Because we weren't in captivity to anything.

INTERVIEWER

Was it just finances that made it stop?

MOORE

No, it wasn't the depression at all. No, the conditions changed. Scofield Thayer had a nervous breakdown, and he didn't come to meetings. Sibley Watson was interested in photography and he had a medical degree, is a doctor of medicine, and lived in Rochester. I was alone. I didn't know that Rochester was about a night's journey away and I would say to Dr. Watson, "Couldn't you come for a make-up meeting, or send me these manuscripts and say what you think of them?" I may, as usual, have exaggerated my enslavement and my preoccupation with tasks—writing letters and reading manuscripts. Originally I had said I would come if I didn't have to write letters and didn't have to see contributors. And presently I was doing both. I think it was largely chivalry—the decision to discontinue *The Dial*—because I didn't have time for my own work.

INTERVIEWER

I wonder how you worked as an editor. Hart Crane complains, in one of his letters, that you rearranged "The Wine Menagerie," and changed the title. Do you feel that you were justified? Did you ask for revisions from many poets?

MOORE

No. We had an unflexible rule: do not ask changes of so much as a comma. Accept it or reject it. But I felt that in compassion, I must disregard the rule. Hart Crane complains

of me? Well, I complain of *him*. He liked the *Dial* and we liked him—friends, and with certain tastes in common. He was in dire need of money. It seemed careless not to so much as ask if he might like to make some changes (“like” in quotation). His gratitude was ardent and later his repudiation of it commensurate—he perhaps being in both instances under a disability with which I was not familiar. (Penalizing us for compassion?) I say “us,” and should say “me.” Really I am not used to having people in that bemused state. He was so *anxious* to have us take that thing, and so *delighted*. “Well, if you would modify it a little,” I said, “we would like it better.” Well, I never attended his wild parties. It was lawless of me to suggest changes.

INTERVIEWER

Have you had editors suggest changes to you? Changes in your own poems, I mean?

MOORE

No, but my ardor to be helped being sincere, I sometimes induce assistance: the *Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, *The New Yorker*, have a number of times had to patch and piece me out. If you have a genius of an editor, you are blessed: e.g., T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, Harry Levin, and others; Irita Van Doren and Miss Belle Rosenbaum.

Have I found “help” helpful? I certainly have; and in three instances when I was at *The Dial*, I hazarded suggestions the results of which to me were drama. Excoriated by George Haven Sheffauer for offering to submit a verbal change or two in his translation of Thomas Mann’s *Disorder and Early Sorrow*, I must have posted the suggestions before I was able to withdraw them. In any case, his joyous subsequent retraction of abuse, and his pleasure in the narrative, were not unwelcome. Gilbert Seldes strongly commended me for excisions proposed by me in his “Jonathan Edwards” (for *The Dial*); and I have not ceased to marvel at the overrating by Mark Van Doren of editorial conscience on my reverting (after an interval) to keep something I had wished he would omit. (Verse! but not a sonnet.)

We should try to judge the work of others by the most that it is, and our own if not by the least that it is, should take the least into consideration. I feel that I would not be worth a button if not grateful to be preserved from myself, and informed if what I have written is not to the point. I think we should feel free, like La Fontaine's captious critic, to say, "Your phrases are too long, and the content is not good. Break up the type and put it in the font." As Kenneth Burke says in *Counter-Statement*: "(Great) artists feel as opportunity what others feel as a menace. This ability does not, I believe, derive from exceptional strength, it probably arrives as purely from professional interest the artist may take in his difficulties."

Lew Sarett says, in the *Poetry Society Bulletin*, that we ask of a poet: Does this mean something? Does the poet say what he has to say and in his own manner? Does it stir the reader?

Shouldn't we replace vanity with honesty as Robert Frost recommends? Annoyances abound. We should not find them lethal, a baffled printer's emendations for instance (my "elephant with frog-colored skin" instead of "fog-colored skin," and "the power of the invisible is the invisible," instead of "the power of the visible is the invisible") sounding like a parody on my meticulousness.

INTERVIEWER

Editing the *Dial* must have acquainted you with the writers of the day whom you did not know already. Had you known Hart Crane earlier?

MOORE

You remember *Broom*? Well, at the beginning of that magazine, in 1921, Lola Ridge was very hospitable, and she invited Kay Boyle and her husband, a French soldier, and Hart Crane and Elinor Wylie, and some others. I took a great liking to Hart Crane, previous to my work at *The Dial*. We talked about French bindings, and he was so diffident and modest and seemed to have so much intuition, such a feel for things, for books—really a bibliophile—that I took special

interest in him. And Doctor Watson and Scofield Thayer liked him ever so much, and felt that he was one of our talents, that he couldn't fit himself into an IBM position to find a livelihood; that we ought to, whenever we could, take anything.

I knew a cousin of his, too, Joe Novak, who is rather proud of him. He lives here in Brooklyn, and is at the Dry Docks Savings Bank and used to work in antiques. Joe was very convinced of Hart's sincerity and his innate love of all that I specified. Anyhow, *The Bridge* is a grand theme. Here and there I think he could have firmed it up. I think it is a terrible thing when a writer is unable to be hard on himself.

INTERVIEWER

Did Crane have anything to do with *Others*?

MOORE

Others antedated *Broom*. *Others* was Alfred Kreymbourg and Skipwith Connell, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams. Wallace Stevens—odd; I came very near to meeting him about a dozen times but I did not meet him till 1941 at Mount Holyoke. It was at the college's *Entretiens de Pontigny* of which Professor Gustav Cohen was Chairman. Wallace Stevens was Henry Church's favorite American poet. Mr. Church had published him and some others and me in *Mésure*, in Paris. Raymond Queneau translated us.

At the French program at Mount Holyoke one afternoon Wallace Stevens had a discourse, the one about Goethe dancing on a packet-boat in black wool stockings. My mother and I were there; and I gave a reading with commentary. Henry Church had an astoundingly beautiful Panama hat—a sort of a pork-pie with a wide brim, a little like Bernard Berenson's hats. I have never seen as fine a weave, and he had a pepper and salt shawl which he draped about himself. The meeting was on the lawn.

Wallace Stevens was extremely friendly. I think I should have had a tape recorder on that occasion, for at lunch they seated us all at a kind of refectory table and there was a girl

who kept asking him questions such as: "Mr. Stevens, have you read "The-Four-Quartets"?"

"Yes, I have, but I can't read much of Eliot or I wouldn't have any individuality of my own."

INTERVIEWER

Do you read new poetry now? Do you try to keep up?

MOORE

More or less. I make no effort, and I get something every day. Some of it is good. But it does interfere with my own tasks. I can't get much done. Yet I would be a monster if I tossed everything away without looking at it. And after all I can write more things inside of half an hour—more notes, letters, cards—than you can think probable.

INTERVIEWER

When you first read Pound in 1916, did you recognize him as one of the great ones?

MOORE

Yes, indeed. That *Spirit of Romance*. I don't think anybody could read that book and feel that a flounderer was writing.

INTERVIEWER

What about the early poems?

MOORE

Oh, yes. They seemed a little didactic, but I liked them.

INTERVIEWER

I wanted to ask you a few questions about poetry in general. Somewhere you have said that originality is a by-product of sincerity. You often use moral terms in your criticism. Is the necessary morality specifically literary, a moral use of words, or is it larger? In what way must a man be good if he is to write good poems?

MOORE

If emotion is strong, the words are forthright and unambiguous. Someone asked Robert Frost (is this right?) if he was selective. He said, "Call it passionate preference."

Must a man be good to write good poems? The villains in Shakespeare are not illiterate, are they? But rectitude *has* a ring that is implicative, I would say. And with *no* integrity, a man is not likely to write the kind of a book I read.

INTERVIEWER

Eliot, in his introduction to your *Selected Poems*, talks about your function as poet relative to the living language, as he calls it. Do you agree that this is a function of a poet? How does the poetry have the effect on the living language? What's the mechanics of it?

MOORE

You accept certain modes of saying a thing. It's a fly in amber, as it were, isn't it? Or you strongly repudiate things. You do something of your own, you modify. I think there's no doubt about that.

INTERVIEWER

I want to ask you a question about your correspondence with the Ford Motor Company, those letters which were printed in *The New Yorker*. They were looking for a name for the car they eventually called the Edsel, and they asked you to think of a name that would make people admire the car—

MOORE

Elegance and grace, they said it would have—

INTERVIEWER

"...some visceral feeling of elegance, fleetness, advanced features and design. A name, in short, which flashes a dramatically desirable picture in people's minds."

MOORE

Really?

INTERVIEWER

That's what they said, in their first letter to you. I was thinking about this in connection with my question about language. Do you remember Pound's talk about expression and meaning? He says that when expression and meaning are far apart, the culture is in a bad way. I was wondering if this request doesn't ask you to remove expression a bit further from meaning.

MOORE

No, I don't think so. At least, exposit the irresistableness of the car. I got deep in motors and turbines and recessed wheels. No. That seemed to me a very worthy pursuit. I was more interested in the mechanics. I am very interested in mechanical things, in mechanics in general. And I enjoyed that assignment, for all it was abortive.

Mr. Pick at the Marquette University procured a young demonstrator of the Edsel to call for me in a black Edsel, to convey me to the auditorium. Nothing was wrong with that Edsel! I thought it was a very handsome car. It came out the wrong year.

INTERVIEWER

Another thing: in your criticism you make frequent analogies between the poet and the scientist. Do you think this analogy is helpful to the modern poet? Most people would consider the comparison a paradox, and assume that the poet and the scientist are opposed.

MOORE

Do the poet and the scientist not work analogously? They are willing to waste effort. To be hard on himself is one of the greatest strengths of each. Each is attentive to clues, each must narrow the choice, must strive for precision. As George Grosz says, "In art there is no place for gossip and but a small place for the satirists." The objective is substance. Is it not? Bronowski says in the new *Post* that science is not a mere collection of discoveries, but that science is the process of

discovering. In any case it's not a thing established once and for all, it's evolving.

INTERVIEWER

One last question. I was intrigued when you wrote that "America has in Wallace Stevens at least one artist whom professionalism will not demolish." What sort of literary professionalism did you have in mind? And do you find this a feature of America still?

MOORE

Yes. I think that writers sometimes lose their verve and their pugnacity, and he never would.

That question I am so often asked: "What work can I find that will enable me to spend my whole time writing?" Charles Ives, the composer, says, "You cannot set art off in a corner and hope for it to have vitality, reality and substance. The fabric weaves itself whole. My work in music helped my business and my work in business helped my music." I am like Charles Ives. Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller would not agree with me.

INTERVIEWER

But how does professionalism make a writer lose his verve and pugnacity?

MOORE

I suppose money has something to do with it and being regarded as a pundit. Wallace Stevens was really very much annoyed at being catalogued, categorized, and compelled to be scientific about what he was doing—to give satisfaction, to answer the teachers. He wouldn't do that. He was independent.

I think the same of William Carlos Williams. I think he wouldn't make so much of the great American language if he were judicious about everything. And that is the beauty of it—he is willing to be reckless, and if you can't be that, what's the point of the whole thing?

—DONALD HALL

THOM GUNN

MY SAD CAPTAINS

One by one they appear in
the darkness: a few friends, and
a few with historical
names. How late they start to shine!
but before they fade they stand
perfectly embodied, all

the past lapping them like a
cloak of chaos. They were men
who, I thought, lived only to
renew the wasteful force they
spent with each hot convulsion.
They remind me, distant now.

True, they are not at rest yet,
but now that they are indeed
apart, winnowed from failures,
they withdraw to an orbit
and turn with disinterested
hard energy, like the stars.

FREDERICK SEIDEL

DAYLEY ISLAND

Gulls spiral high above
The porch tiles and my gulf-green,
Cliff-hanging lawn, with their
Out-of-breath wail, as
Dawn catches the silver ball
Set in the dried up bird bath
To scare the gulls. My slippers
Exhale lamé.

I was egged on by old age—
To sell that house,
Winterize this house,
Give up my practice... that
You, Pauli, gave up
At Belzec, our son at Belsen,
And one at Maidenek,
Our last at Maidenek.

Below the cliff, the shallows
Tear apart, beating
Themselves white and black,
While the sea's smooth other edge
Towers, reddening,
Over the surfacing sun.
I rise early, always,
Earlier each day...

Holding on.
But it's the island that's locked in
By the sea—a case
Of vaginismus, Pauli—
Except for the one bridge
To the next island. I'm free—
Dayley's first once Jewish,
Non-practicing analyst:

Old, but she has no helper;
Station-wagon, but
She's not a tourist; poor for
An island Venus or matron.
The man who sells me fish
Says he fought my Nazis,
The captured ones talked
Just like me—I'm somebody.

Last week—March-cold
In the middle of August,
Snow-blue, high, thin skies—
I drove the hour to Brunswick
To drop my suits at
Maine's Only Chinese Laundry,
A down-caster's,
With a Negro presser.

The man was just then off
For Hagard to shoot rabbits
For the reward,
Three miles off Dayley's east shore.
Years before,
A mainlander
Had loosed two white rabbits
There; now it was theirs.

Frail, pink-veined, pale ears,
And pink as perfect gums,
Pink eyes, rose noses, as if
Diseased—I'd been there.
The lead-gray Yankee owner,
After the shotgun blast,
Strode forward, gathered the bunch,
And one by one, grabbed each

By its hind legs while it sobbed,
And swinging it against
The bare lawn, slapped it dead,
And swung it to the shrubs.
I left the cleaners wanting
So to tell you. The sun's
Well up now. Our blue carpet's
Fading evergreen, Pauli.

PHILIP BOOTH

NIGHT NOTES ON AN OLD DREAM

Like a seal
in broken sleep,
aware of how
cold the moonlight
lies on salt ice,
I let the sea
work. The floodtide
under my skull,
lugged by the full
March moon, under-
cuts the barrier
shelf, folds back, and
opens a lead
to my forehead.
The moon waves in.
Adrift, and washed
by the equinox,
I let the sea
work. Under me
the shelf calves off;
my sleep ebbs East,
offshore. Sure, for
once, I am neither
mad nor dead, I
dive awake from
the floe where last
night's snowbirds rise;
and I count them,
white and moonstruck,
climbing, beyond
Orion, to the moon
behind my eyes.

1263h



The Mourner

The tracks coming into Galleton wind down the mountain walls that hold the valley in a giant vortex, the town at its center. Once on the valley floor, the skein is lost in a web of swirling bands and innumerable junctions which converge, at last, upon the yard and then the shed, a great steel-ribbed maw, hollow, echoing, a skin-covered skeleton without muscle or viscera, no heart, and an empty womb.

Gabriel sat with his cheek against the train window, one foot on his suitcase. It was dusk and the lights outside were coming on. When the conductor opened the door, the smell of the dinner in the car ahead sweetened the conditioned air. His stomach muscles grabbed, sore and knotted from motion sickness in spite of the bitter pills he'd swallowed. He turned his face to the window and saw his reflection, saw it and through it to vague moving masses and figures in the yard. His face in the window was a smear of black eyebrows unbroken over his nose, and a long oval jaw and cheek line that might have hung from hoops on his ears like a false whiskers, an easy face to caricature. The noise of the clacking wheels thundered an instant before the conductor closed the door again. The little boy across the aisle got up again for water. He'd kept on his hat all the way down from St. Louis, an imitation pith helmet, straw painted white, with Lion Tamer stenciled across the crown.

The other passengers began to stir, to stand and stretch and reach down luggage from the overhead racks. One old woman got her bundles together and trudged up the aisle to stand at the door. Then the aisle filled before the train stopped. He watched the boy's helmet topple as, outside, his father lifted him. He'd traveled alone, the lion tamer, now he was

home again, a child. His face pouted and posed. Gabriel waited for the car to empty before rising and gathering his things.

A porter came toward him when he stepped down onto the platform. He shook his head and muttered, following the stragglers down the concrete stair and into the dank tunnel that led under the tracks to the terminal. He climbed the ramp. The station was bright after the tunnel and the train. The people, the booths, the benches like pews in a church were small under the domed ceiling three or four lost stories high. On the street outside, he set his suitcase down and waited for a taxi. Before him the long avenue pointed toward the heart of the city. Across the mouth of the viaduct that spanned the railroad yard the neon sign bubbled—Galleton, The Magic City. And in smaller lights, Home of Dixie Steel. Beyond, the downtown lights blinked like afflicted eyes. Stars sparked the surrounding hills. Atop Bald Mountain the Iron Man held his torch. And away off across the valley the glow from the furnaces scorched the sky.

He hailed a cruising cab, climbed in, and gave the address. The driver grunted, reached back and slammed the door. "First time in Galleton, son?"

The muscles of his stomach braced as the cab lurched forward. "No."

The cab entered downtown traffic. The tires caught the streetcar tracks, hummed a moment, and jumped aside. What's his hurry, Gabriel wondered. It used to take half an hour. A half hour. He wanted to sleep. Last night at this time—let's see—the night before, Salt Lake City. Last week—he backed away. He saw himself, a figure grown pin size in distance. When he was a kid on his way to the dentist he'd thought, a half hour from now I'll be through it, tomorrow at this time... Or confession. It was the same when the nuns herded him with the rest across the school yard to the church, to confession.

They were through the city. The cab took all the shortcuts. He thought: for once, an honest cabby, prides himself on his honesty, a simple measure of worth, a matter of shortcuts.

He watched the signboards and drug stores. The laundry: We Wash Everything But The Kids. The parts shop with its yard of wrecks. We salvage everything but the... He let it go. There was the motel like an Indian village. Teepeetown. Heap big deal. He leaned forward and began to direct the driver. They were getting close. In the fair grounds the stock car races were on. Guttled mufflers roared, rubber screamed. The circle of track was hidden behind a white board fence. Floodlights looked down on the race he couldn't see. The speakers blared: "Round and round they go, where they stop..."

The cab turned off the avenue and climbed the hill. Now it crawled. Gabriel watched the houses pass. Now he could call the names of the people who lived in them—Romano, Mancina, Vlato, Morello. And under the noise of the speedway, voices called across the street. It was good dark now, and behind the hilltop the blare of the furnaces sat like a sunburst on the head of a saint.

"It's up there," he said.

The house was lighted from top to bottom, but there weren't any cars out front. When they stopped, he paid the driver and then stood looking up at the house while the cab drove off.

All there but the lightning rods and porcelain baubles. All there—turrets, bay windows, the round tower and coconut frosting. As real as Disneyland. Up they moved, Morello-Giardini-Vlato-Virciglio, up from the banks of the mill to the iced and frosted summit of the hill, out at last from the shadow of the railroad sheds, away from the giant furnaces, they moved. And with them, moving also into the many-storied ghosts of a dead time, the keepers of homes for the aged, and the Greek morticians.

The skinny figure of a woman tripped toward him down the sidewalk. He recognized her. Mrs. Ricardi. The name played in his head. Mrs. Ricardi. *Misericordia*.

He turned. *Misericordiam tuam. Miserere nobis*. Before she could recognize him, he climbed the bank and started up the path in the shadow of the trees. *In nomine Patris, et Filii...*

He mounted the steps and crossed the porch and stood a moment looking through the screen door into the lighted hall before he pressed the bell. And whoever said you can't go home again? Home is where the heart is, cold and pickled in a bottle like the embryo of a freak. Home is where you hang yourself. Home sweet *homo sapiens*, conglomerate polyglot *in nomine*...

The chimes of the doorbell sounded. *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*, blessed is he who comes...

A priest came toward him down the hall. His brother.

"Gabriel!"

"Hello, Vincent."

"Thank God you've come. The funeral should have been yesterday, but Momma wouldn't hear—not till you'd come. I didn't think— If you wired, we didn't get it."

"Where is she?"

"At the undertaker's. They'll be back soon. People keep coming."

Gabriel set his suitcase down in the hall and walked into the living room. It was smaller and the wainscoting darker than he'd remembered. Vincent came behind him and took up his pipe from the smoking stand.

"I gave him the last sacrament myself," he said.

Gabriel nodded.

"He lived a long life, and," there was a shrug in his voice, "a good one."

Gabriel turned and glanced at him.

"A good life as he saw it," Vincent said.

Gabriel yawned. "Anything to eat?"

Vincent led the way back to the kitchen. The round oak table was loaded with dishes that made a mountainous winter landscape under the white cover cloth. Gabriel lifted a corner and drew out a chicken leg. Vincent poured milk from a flowered pitcher and handed it to him.

Leaning against the door, he looked at the room while he ate. The linoleum was bright and new, but the naked light-bulb hung yet from its knotted cord. He stripped off the last meat from the drumstick and washed it down with milk.

"What now, Vince?" he said.

Vincent shrugged. "They haven't much. The house—a little insurance."

"Teena has a job."

"She doesn't make a lot. This is a big house, expensive to keep."

"They'll have to get rid of it," Gabriel said. They looked at each other.

Vincent shrugged. "Time enough to talk about all that."

Gabriel felt the nausea from the train returning. "I'm tired," he said.

"They won't be long now."

He wandered through the rooms, Vincent strolling behind him, his hands in his pockets, his face behind its chimney of smoke. He looked into the dining room that had for years been his grandfather's bedroom. The old man had feared the stairs. He'd hoarded life, that old man who talked so much of heaven. Well, now he was dead. The bed was made. Not a crease or rumple marked where he'd been. Gabriel looked over his shoulder at his brother. "A good life," he snorted.

"Why don't you lie down?" Vincent said. "I'll call you when they come. Go on, you look worn out."

Gabriel went into the room and dropped across the bed. The light from the hall silhouetted Vincent in the door.

"Two kinds of people, Vince," Gabriel said. "Parasites and hosts."

"Only one host, Gaby. One host for all of us."

Gabriel grunted. "Don't talk shop to me, Vince."

"All right. Two kinds of people. So if you're not a host, then you're a parasite."

"They teach you logic in the seminary, Vince?"

"Logic and ethics," Vincent said. "Be good to Momma, Gaby. She's beside herself."

"Go away. Let me sleep." He rolled on his side and waited to hear Vincent's footsteps down the hall before he closed his eyes.

The smell of the old man was still in the room. It was in the pillows and mattress, the smell of stale tobacco and that sour

smell common to old men and babies. Gabriel fell asleep. He dreamed of the forbidden cave he and Vincent had explored as children. The entrance was like a big ground hog's burrow, a hole under the hillside too steep for houses where a little woods still grew. The place was called McFarland's spring, because at the foot of the hill, in the McFarlands' vacant lot, springs bubbled out of the ground, almost hidden by fern and lined with the soft limestone called soapstone. You could rub the smooth surfaces with wet hands and stir up a gritty lather.

To enter the cave, you had to slide on the seat of your pants. The hard-baked earth was always slick and moist. At the bottom, you crawled under a rock and came out into a little room where the floor was muddy. It was dark and dank, smelling of urine, for tramps used the place. There, the boys always whispered.

The bed sagged and Gabriel struck out, grasping for balance at the covers. He opened his eyes. His mother sat beside him, and for an instant he felt the old fear, the guilt at being discovered with muddy trousers.

"Momma," he whispered. "Momma *mia*—"

She put her hand on his forehead, brushing back his hair. "My Gabriello. My boy."

Her eyes were a little wild, and her black hair stood high and wild on her forehead. She whispered wordlessly, her hands touching him as they might feel a child for broken bones.

He put his arms around her and tried to rise, but she fell over him, sobbing. He could see the glow of Vincent's pipe in the dim room and the picture of Vincent the child came tunneling back to him, Vincent out of the light, Vincent watching with hunger in his eyes while his hands found something to occupy themselves—a piece of string, a rubber band—something to twist while he watched there from the darkness the two of them together in the light. Gabriel let his breath escape slowly, forced out of him by the weight of her on his chest. When it was gone, he couldn't breathe again. He put his arms around her and raised up.

"How are you, Momma? All right?"

"My boy—my Gahbee."

Then Vincent switched on the light. Gabriel stood up, drawing her to her feet.

"Come in the parlor, Gahbee," she said, taking his hand and leading him. "Teena! Eva Marie! Your brother, he's home. Come look at him!"

In the parlor, she stood him under the light, holding onto his arm. "Why you're so pale, Gahbee? You don't drink! You wouldn't do that to me!"

"I had a beard, Momma. I shaved it off."

"Oh, no beard, Gahbee. Let it show, your face. Why you hide your face?"

He led her to the big square couch with its walnut, slatted back and eased her down. She caught his hand and he stood awkwardly before her.

"Gaby!"

He turned. His sister, Eva Marie, rolled toward him, looking in her pregnancy like a pyramid of bright colored balloons. He stared at her. She'd been slim and beautiful when he saw her last, this gross woman. She hugged and kissed him and he felt like a rail in her arms. Her husband Antony came behind her.

"Hallo, Gabriello. Long time no see. Your sister, she eat me outa house and home. Some woman. Whatta woman." He shook his head at the wonder of her and pinched her bottom proudly. He was a small man, a grocer and vendor of fancy fruits.

They shook hands. "Hello, Tony."

"You oughta see our boys, Gabriello. We got big boys—like their momma. Whatta girl."

"Our last one, our Vincent, he's mean as you were, Gaby." Eva Marie giggled and shook. "We wanted you to be God-poppa to him."

Then he saw his aunt Teena standing in the door, miffed at having been so long overlooked.

"Have you eaten, Gabriello?" She'd show them who held this house together.

He nodded. "Yes, Teena. How are you?" He bent and kissed her lips, which she compressed tightly to hold her lipstick intact.

"Where's your bag? Your things oughta be got out and hung up. All the company we had, you'll need your clothes. I'll hang the wrinkles out." She was a tiny thing, getting dumpy, and she wore her skirts short to show off her little feet, of which she was very proud.

"It's too late, Teena. They've been too long in the suitcase."

"You never know," she said. "Let me at 'em no telling what I might do." She winked. "Save you a pressing bill." She had seen his suitcase and now she went to get it. He moved to take it from her, but his mother reached out for him.

"Come here, Gahbee. Sit by your momma."

Teena struggled off with the weight of the canvas bag, mincing in her little shoes. He let himself be pulled down. They all settled in a circle of chairs that made the room look as if it were arranged for a meeting of some kind.

His mother put her hand over his, plucked his fingers, traced his knuckles, patted. "Poppa, your grampa, he's gone now, Gahbee."

"I'm sorry, Momma."

"Are you, my boy? Yes, we must all of us grieve. He was such a strong man. Never did he miss a day's work in his life, Gahbee. Think of it! Not a day. We can all be thankful for that. He had his health to the end."

Teena called from the kitchen where she'd hauled out the ironing board. "A fine constitution. All the doctors said it, Gabriello. A constitution unheard of in a man his age."

"And Gahbee's just like him. They were like as two peas. That's why," his mother nodded, "that's why they never got on together. Too much alike." She leaned toward him with her wild eyes. "He said, Gabriel, Poppa said every day, 'Tell that boy to come home where he belongs to be. Get him back here. If he's so set on painting he can paint houses, all the houses on the hill. There's money in that.'" She laughed.

"He would be happy to know he was the one brought you back, Gahbee. He liked to have his way."

"Fine figure of a man till the day he died," Teena called in. "And he laid out beautiful too."

His mother was plucking at his fingers again. "Like as two peas. I tell 'em all. Gahbee's the one like his Grampa. All my children handsome and beautiful. But Gahbee's the one. Now Vincent, he's a fine figure of a man. But a priest got no business to be handsome. It's more against him. Turns the girls' heads and makes their mommas sick in church at the loss." She laughed. Gabriel looked across the room at Vincent grinning in the doorway.

"Tell me where you live out there, Gahbee."

"You got a car?" Tony wanted to know.

"I live upstairs at this lady's house, Momma, like I wrote you."

"Ahah!" Tony said. "A lady!"

"How she feed, that lady?"

"She doesn't feed me. I just room there. I eat out."

"At's no good, eat out! A growing boy needsa be fed at home."

"Momma," he laughed. "I quit growing."

"Hah! Vincent, he grows still."

Tony clapped his knee. "In the belly."

Gabriel looked again at Vincent, but he could not see his face clearly behind the smokescreen his pipe put out.

"Let *me* tell you about growing boys," Eva Marie said, waving her hand. "I got three and I know all about 'em. You only seen just the one, Gaby, my Andrew. The middle one, he's got them black brows with light hair, like you. Teena says that hair, it comes from our father."

Thump! His mother's fist came down on the walnut arm of the sofa. "Don't speak of that tenor your father here in this house where Poppa passed. Oh, Poppa, he told me. But I wouldn't listen. Weak, he said, useless. More woman that one couldn't find nowhere than me, your momma! Too much woman for that singer." She laughed a short hoot of laughter. "I give him children, fine children, all in a row. Vincent,

Eva Marie, Gahbee. Beautiful children! And off he goes, Gahbee nothing but a child. And all my other children, them I never had—" Her shoulders shook, and her voice pierced. Gabriel felt somewhere deep under his ribs the long forgotten but instantly familiar tremor, like the tremor set up in the house by the Frigidaire motor starting at night in the darkness under the cellar stairs, remembered from his childhood. Vincent crossed the room to sit on the other side of her, to pick up both her hands.

"Momma, now Momma." But she snatched her hands away from him.

"Let us pray, Vincent. Lead a prayer. The mysteries, the sorrowful mysteries, for Poppa." She took Gabriel's hand and drew him closer. "And the joyful ones too, Vincent, for my Gahbriel come home."

Antony heaved himself out of his chair and onto his knees. Gabriel heard the thud as Teena knelt beside the ironing board out in the kitchen. Vincent took out his rosary and helped his mother down. Only Eva Marie, solemn now in her pregnancy, tugged her skirts toward her knees and remained enthroned in the big wing chair. They waited. Gabriel plucked at the sofa cushion.

"On your knees," his mother said. "You will get down on your knees, Gabriello."

He looked at her wild eyes, watched her hands grasp for him. The others did not look up.

"Kneel!" she shouted. "You will this once be like us. Kneel to your God, Gabriello Orghesi. Kneel!"

Trembling suddenly to his scalp, Gabriel slid to his knees. And quickly Vincent began.

Finally, in the car going to the undertaker's, Vincent asked him, "You're going back?"

He didn't answer at once. He knew his brother's mind. Why did you come at all? Then, angry at the words that, though unspoken, nevertheless lay palpable between them, he mouthed, "The sooner the quicker," and was immediately disgusted at his own facetiousness.

They rode in silence, Vincent too big for the car, a big dark giant whose hands on the wheel looked like a man's hands driving a child's push-peddle car. He hunched down to see out of the windshield.

Gabriel laid his head back on the seat and looked up at the sudden sun that leaped against the hill as steel was poured, like fire from a cauldron tipped in hell. And then came the roar. The city seemed then to him like a gigantic, prostrate, functioning body, pillowed on the hills. Eyes and arteries, now the bowels. The smell of sulfur seeped around the windows and rose up through the floorboards.

"God," he said, "I'd forgotten."

The undertaker's establishment was the only building lighted now on the littered street. It was a one-story brick building that might have housed a grocery in this long-dying suburb under the plant, and it opened directly onto the sidewalk. No awning-covered walk, no tended grass, unnaturally green, no muted lights spotted on colonial false front, no euphemistic legend under glass like a church announcement of next Sunday's sermon attempted to call the place a "funeral home." It was simply, almost brutally, what it was, the undertaker's place of business. Inside, the ceiling and walls, dirty from the mill, were watermarked in pale patterns, distortions by Dali. And against the smell of sulfur no flower could have breathed. Lights blazed from naked ceiling hangings. Nothing here was indirect.

In the parlors, old men lined against the walls, speaking in gruff whispers, a people consecrated to death, rededicating themselves each Sunday, and now in the middle of the week. It walked to meet them in familiar forms, diseased or crippled, seldom peaceful, and one had seen a brother drop from catwalk to cauldron of molten steel that blazed like an incandescent pool on the sun, had seen his brother drop and start to run across the viscous fire while his legs melted under him and, poised, startled on his shrinking stumps, he slowly sank, his mouth gaped open at whatever it was he contemplated. They lined the walls in awe, timid, speaking now and then in low tones the language that, like a wall, kept them isolated

and safe in this world where their children walked away but where they would always stay, uneasy.

They stared respectfully at Vincent, the priest. They nodded when spoken to, suddenly bestirring themselves, pushing upright from the walls, smiling uncertainly, bobbing heads and twisting dirty caps like wheels in their gnarled and scaly hands. And it would take awhile for them to unwind again, relax again against the walls. Gabriel felt their eyes upon him as he passed and they tried to place his familiar face.

He followed Vincent into the "chapel" from which the body would be moved in the morning to the church. He tried to examine his feelings as he walked down the uncarpeted aisle where his footsteps clacked. He found no feelings to examine.

Vincent stepped aside into one of the pews to kneel, and Gabriel walked ahead. The body revealed itself to him in pieces, first the nose, unnaturally powdered, and then the shock of hair that had sprung loose from where they'd tried to paste it down. The dark hair over that aged face, powdered and rouged, made the old man look strangely alive, like a young actor playing an aged corpse. And then he saw the fist and he thought: he died like that, clenching that fist, and they couldn't pry it loose. Someone had drawn a black rosary through the fingers. The old man's hand gripped it like the collar of a thief he did not mean to get away. The rouge could not hide that burnt black mottling under the skin where the furnaces had left their brand. The fist, the mottled face, the springing hair would have mocked death had it not been for the undertaker's crude art that sought to make him "natural."

"I've come to bury you," he said silently to the corpse.

The flared nostrils seemed to breathe and the stiff black hairs protruding seemed to quiver. Gabriel might have trembled like the boy he used to be, had there not been the ludicrous art of the undertaker to reassure him.

He could hear the old man's voice shake with rage, scream, "Not you. Death!" turning it to a privilege. Hearing the voice, Gabriel felt the old man standing there at his elbow, looking critically down into the bright pink tufted box. He

drew his shoulders in, shrugged to rid himself of the phantom and to try again to place the old man where he'd had him so he could speak without being interrupted. "I forgive you," he said. But again he heard from somewhere behind him. "Who the devil do you think you are?"

He turned quickly and, without waiting for Vincent, went out of the room, went past the pairs of shifting boots with high creased tops and humped and rounded toes scarred by ends of pipe and corners of sheet and rails. A voice said "*Scusi*." He waited on the sidewalk for Vincent to come out, and as they drove home again he closed his eyes, pretending to sleep.

But he could not sleep, not even when, in his old bed, hard and narrow as the cot of a monk, he wrapped himself in darkness. He lay on his side and looked out the window and down across the street to where Mrs. Ricardi sat in her porch swing, silhouetted against the yellow light in her lace-curtained windows. How many nights had he gone to sleep watching her there? Mrs. Ricardi. The Wanderer. Living alone, spending her days over the neighborhood, from kitchen to kitchen, drumming her fingers, finishing sentences other people started—

"It's going to be—"

"A pretty day—a pretty day—"

"Fall—"

"Late—late this year—oh, late—"

—impatient to be off again, Mrs. Ricardi. He knew he would see her there, if he woke early, waiting for signs of life, sipping her lemonade—for her bowels, she said, and she attributed to it not only her regularity, but her longevity as well. Then she would wander again, across yards, through gardens, down alleys, from house to house, her arms crossed and held tight to her flat slab of breast, her thin body driven by some wind that only she could feel. And eventually she would tell you how, when she was young, the sewing machine people voted her Miss Twinkle Treadle and put her picture on their directions booklet and gave her a sewing machine free.

Across the valley he could see the television towers on the mountain top. He thought of San Francisco, the lights on the hillsides like luminous honey in a giant comb. Cassidy, Bowles and the others were at the wharf now, cracking crab and drinking beer and talking. Cassidy would be doing most of the talking, the Right Reverend G. B. Shaw Cassidy. That big Irishman. "You're a dreamer, Gabe," he'd say. "Me, I'm a realist." And he drew a picture of the world exploding—very detailed in the dismembered bodies and blood in the manner of a medieval rendering of hell, and in the corner, a serene little figure with a beard turned his back to it all and painted children's blocks on a Mondrianesque canvas. "That's you, Gabe," Cassidy said.

"Take up writing, Cassidy," he answered. "You're good at anecdote."

Composition. Architecture. Cassidy said a painting must have those things. A painter's duty to mankind—and, more important, mankind's duty to the painter. The painter, in Cassidy's philosophy, deserved to be kept and coddled like a concubine. Modern art was irresponsible because it was "rarefied—escapist." Cassidy liked words. But Cassidy was a realist. He painted things—tables and apples and chairs and cats.

In the beginning Gabriel had talked too. "What is real?" he asked. "You think this table—that cat—they are reality? They are things. Put them before you they become a wall. Things are walls to go through."

"Then go through them!" Cassidy would shout. "Don't for heaven's sake deny they are there." And he would try to persuade him he must go to the University (where he could take classes from Cassidy). An artist cannot be illiterate, he would say.

And Gabriel would wave a blessing in the air before Cassidy's face, intoning "Universitas Californiensis".

Whereupon, Cassidy, incensed, would grumble off, and he and Bowles would sit until the fish houses closed and then move up to Chinatown, and be caught by morning in a Settlement basement watching those strange young men and women who spoke a language more foreign than the China-

man, who claimed the city as theirs and reduced art and God and the sidereal universe by the most common denominator, who loved their fellow man (so long as he was filthy, diseased, destitute, or mad), who sometimes turned on him and Bowles and said, "Speak, man, speak."

And sometimes Bowles would speak to them while they listened intently, "Gone, man, gone." And Gabriel would compose his face while Bowles revelled in nonsense to see how long they'd listen before recognizing it. Bowles had three degrees. He knew it all. But he only believed one thing—that there were no answers for Bowles. And, poor fellow, he was a good painter, better by far than Cassidy, good enough to know how mediocre "good" can be.

"Now you, Gabe, maybe you've got it." He attributed it all to a Southern-Italian-Catholic background. "You've got plenty driving you away. Maybe if they drive you far enough away you'll get there. Maybe you'll do it, you're ignorant enough, you've never learned the horror of tolerance," he would say toward morning when he was, mercifully, drunk at last.

It was only when he was very sleepy that he let himself think again of the old man lying ill-at-ease in death on the tufted pink in a dark and unfamiliar place, locked up, a commodity in a box, alone for this long night. He saw again the fist that had not meant to clutch a rosary. He asked: When did it come, this anger like a yoke we wore, binding us and holding us apart? I am my father's son, he said to the presence listening, angry, inarticulate. Whoever he was, that singer of Italian arias, I'm his, however bad you hated. For I saw early that simple truth in your fierce and vengeful eyes when you looked at me, at the brush in my hand, at the wobbling home-made easel, and asked if I didn't want to sing. He said: the anger came the day you cut my hair, and, shorn and grim, I yet refused to bawl; it came when at the age of twelve I was by your commandment circumcized; it came when I, sixteen, crept in from being with a girl and you and your razor strop preached chastity and virtue. You're dead, he said to the presence, go lie down.

When he slept he was riding again, across the luminous wastes of the salt flats at night, lost in that northern desert the color of leprous flesh. And over and over he dreamed those arrogant words he'd prayed as an altar boy here in this place from which he'd never hoped to escape: Oh God, grant me one grain of the salt of Thy wisdom—one grain, and I will carry the sacrament of it to the altar of my own fashioning on the peak of this earth where it may illumine mankind forever and ever, amen. Your servant, Gabriello Orghesi. And p.s., oh my Father, deliver me.

In nomine Patris, et Filii. Before the altar, black vested, the priest, his brother, raises hands. And in the aisle, the bier. *Oramus te, Domine.* Bows down to kiss the stone.

Kyrie eleison... Gloria... Credo in unum Deum... Suscipe... Pater Noster, qui es in coelis... Libera nos, Domine... Per omnia saecula saeculorum... Dominus vobiscum... Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus Pater et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus... Deo gratias.

Through it, Gabriel sat, knelt, stood, the responses on his tongue, before the museum, the shrine, the tabernacle opening to gape. "I forgive you," he said. And the old man thundered.

Later, beside the open grave, he stood long after all the prayers and holy water sprinkling. His mother plucked his arm. "Gabriello, come."

He pulled himself free and finally was left alone under the tent, hearing the caravan of cars, feeling the black-robed presence of Vincent up the green slope, waiting. The grave diggers, sullen at his interfering presence, began their tasks. Up came the rails, the canvas straps, away the paper grass. And there the earth—naked raw red gash exposed. He took up a shovel and onto the dull glow of the coffin the fresh dirt splattered. But while he leaned on the shovel and watched, the old man stood beside him, at his elbow, watching too. Defeated, he flung down the shovel and turned.

Vincent slid behind the wheel and there between them the old man sat.

At home, he gathered up his things in the canvas bag and zipped the zipper while she wailed beside him and his

stomach, knotting, felt like the stomach of a bilious child. Impatient, he waited in the kitchen while she packed a shoe-box lunch for him to take along, fussing Teena, miffed acolyte, out of her way. Hysteria sat like a mask on her face. Silent in the front room with lingering friends, Eva Marie and her frightened boys.

"I'll send you money every month," he said, able to speak now it was so close. Later he could think of how.

"Money!" she cried.

He stood at the door of the old man's room, smelling the aged smell of him, seeing the imprint of a body on the spread. He shivered, then remembered it was his own.

Then through the city again, two cars to the station. Himself, and Vincent, their mother, *the old man*, in one. Behind them Eva Marie and the boys in the furious chariot Teena hurled against the traffic, her little foot determined on the gas, her neck stretched so she could see out at all.

On the noisy platform, they huddled around him, all but Vincent, who held himself apart, puffing too manfully at the pipe in his clenched teeth. The boys shouted shrilly over exploding steam, listing what they wanted of the West. Horses. Guns. Real hats and leather chaps. A tumble weed. One Indian. (They were being reasonable.) Some rope.

His mother, gesturing with her hands, was suddenly quite gay. If she breaks, he prayed, let it be after. She told him to eat and say his prayers. He reached for the shoe box under her arm, but she turned aside.

"Anh-anh, not yet, Gabriello. I got a surprise."

"She's going too!" one of the boys shrilled over the conductor's "All aborrirt."

Gabriel whirled, sought the faces that smiled their sly secret, all but the closed up face of Vincent behind his formidable pipe.

"That's right, Gabriello," she said, hugging the shoe-box, moving to the step a porter flung down below the high door of the coach. "Why you think I pack so big a lunch, hah?" He backed into the shadow of the train, facing them. But he knew it was a joke and he had to help them with it. He turned

to laugh with her, but she was gone. He saw the shoe box disappear into the train, helped aboard by the conductor who looked at him and shouted again, "All aborrrrrt!"

They piled upon him, the boys and Eva Marie, kissing, while Spartan Teena stood aside, a tableau of courage under fire. And Vincent took his pipe out of his mouth and stepped up to shake his hand and grasp his arm. Gabriel wrenched free.

"No. Look here, Vince, what's the meaning—"

But Vincent took his arm again. "Hurry."

"Vince, what's she doing, Vince! Vincent!"

But he was standing on the steps, hoisted up by his brother who stood on the bottom step, barring his way. "Go along with it," Vincent hissed into his face.

"Get her off of here!"

"You can do this one thing."

"No. Not with me. She can't go. Not with me."

"You are a fool," Vincent said, his face straining red while he clung there and the train began to move. The others waved and shouted. He glimpsed tears on Teena's face as the edge of the car cut off his view of her. The others, fat Eva Marie and the shouting boys, ran alongside. "Jump, Vincent! Jump down!"

"You've tricked me," Gabriel shouted into his brother's close face.

"No," Vincent said. "Tony will meet her just outside the valley. He's gone already to the junction."

And then as the train lumbered out from under the shed, Vincent leapt back and ran for a moment alongside. Gabriel's last view of his face caught his smile and his stout contempt. He'd proven something to himself.

The conductor touched his arm and Gabriel let himself be hoisted to the coupling bridge. He made his way down the swaying aisle to where she sat, smug and for the moment happy, untying their lunch. He stopped an aproned boy and bought two bottles of pop and sat beside her.

"Is nice surprise, Gabriello?"

He forced a smile and nodded, seeing Vincent's face, *the old man*.

"Califorr-nyah!" She waved a sandwich. He caught her hand and took the sandwich from her.

"You eat better now I take care of you, Gahbee."

He stuffed the sandwich in his mouth. The seat ahead was empty. He flipped the back and moved across to face her. She drank from her bottle and pressed against the window, looking out. Now the train began to climb. They entered a tunnel, and when they came back into the sun, her expression had changed. The sandwich was limp in her hand and the pop no longer fizzed. "You don't look happy at my coming, Gabriel."

"Momma." He reached across the space and patted her knee, seeing Vincent laughing from the shadows, Vincent the boy alone, disdaining their sandwiches.

"We have us a time, hah?" Now she laughed. "We have us picnics out there?"

"Lots of picnics."

"I can pose for a picture, Gahbee. Remember that time? You make you that—whatchacallit?"

"Easel."

"Yes. And I sit down and let my dinner burn. Remember?"

"I remember."

"And you call it Madonna. Is sacrilegious." She laughed. "You was just a boy."

Then, recalling his infirmity, she took a pill from her large black pocketbook. "Here, right this minute, swallow."

He took the yellow pill on his tongue and washed it down while she followed the movement of his throat.

"You don't look like Poppa," she said. "You look like that singer." And she lapsed back into silence, staring at the wall of clay outside and close to the window, passing in a blur, dizzying.

Five minutes more and they'd emerge upon the summit. Five minutes after that and Tony's face would grin up at them, pleased at his part in the conspiracy.

"We got us a long trip ahead," she said sadly.

He laid his head back and gave in to the weariness. He had accomplished it. He had returned and now he left again.

Libera nos, Domine. Gratias. He heard her spring and felt her at his side.

“Sick already!”

He shook his head, feeling the surge of the curving car and her kneading fingers on his hand. She pulled his head to her shoulder and stroked his hair.

“Gabriello—Gahbee—my boy,” she crooned.

He allowed himself the pillow of her, for soon they would emerge from that steep place onto a plain and he would be alone. The clacking wheels turned and turned and birth is not a thing of ones, one spasm, one swelling, one hour of pain, one cry. Between the wombs of woman and the grave, upon this belly earth, the fetus reenacts itself a thousand times; breath tears and struggles in its caul; the shroud awaits; the angel of despair spreads wings like nets to catch the risers; bear your birth, the angel said. He allowed them both this sleeping moment before the rent, the breaking tears, the cry, before this monster he was riding bore him off again to peace and loneliness.

CHARLES REYNOLDS

FOR KATE

At dawn, in that uncertain time,
As restless as the earth to bear
The new late rain, I walk knee-deep
To where the bay-hound coughs asleep
And turning, change my way to climb
The shed hill in the laden air,
And underfoot green leaves excite
Wind that visited sea and sands
And twisted these leaves in the night
Out of the rain's indifferent hands.

And on the shed and raw-wood wall
The too-young leaves, a slow light green
And white: leaves from the birch-wood brakes
Near blossoms that the chestnut makes,
And in the trees the blackbirds call
And chipmunks in the grass between,
And on the shed's rough wall, the sun
Drying the leaves that plastered there
Still wet, and dropping one by one,
The leaves and petals in the air.

So I have found them, just at dawn
When nuns kneel down upon their knees
And the young lover's cough alarms
The white still unaccustomed arms.
It is at early spring I've gone
To where the morning shades agree
So simply: white and light green, bare
And still: leaves from the birch-wood brakes
And by the leaves the white and fair
Slow blossoms that the chestnut makes.

TWO POEMS by W. S. MERWIN

OCTOBER

I remember how I would say, "I will gather
These pieces together,
Any minute now I will make
A knife out of a cloud."
Even then the days
Went leaving their wounds behind them,
But, "Monument," I kept saying to the grave,
"I am still your legend."

There was another time
When our hands met and the clocks struck
And we lived on the point of a needle, like angels.

I have seen the spider's triumph
In the palm of my hand. Above
My grave, that thoroughfare,
There are words now that can bring
My eyes to my feet, tamed.
Beyond the trees wearing names that are not their own
The paths are growing like smoke.

The promises have gone,
Gone, gone, and they were here just now.
There is the sky where they laid their fish.
Soon it will be evening.

THE NAILS

I gave you sorrow to hang on your wall
Like a calendar in one color.
I wear a torn place on my sleeve.
It isn't as simple as that.

Between no place of mine and no place of yours
You'd have thought I'd know the way by now
Just from thinking it over.
Oh I know
I've no excuse to be stuck here turning
Like a mirror on a string,
Except it's hardly credible how
It all keeps changing.
Loss has a wider choice of directions
Than the other thing.

As if I had a system
I shuffle among the lies
Turning them over, if only
I could be sure what I'd lost.
I uncover my footprints, I
Poke them till the eyes open.
They don't recall what it looked like.
When was I using it last?
Was it like a ring or a light
Or the autumn pond
Which chokes and glitters but
Grows colder?
It could be all in the mind. Anyway
Nothing seems to bring it back to me.

And I've been to see
Your hands as trees borne away on a flood,
The same film over and over,
And an old one at that, shattering its account
To the last of the digits, and nothing
And the blank end.

The lightning has shown me the scars of the future.

I've had a long look at someone
Alone like a key in a lock
Without what it takes to turn.

It isn't as simple as that.

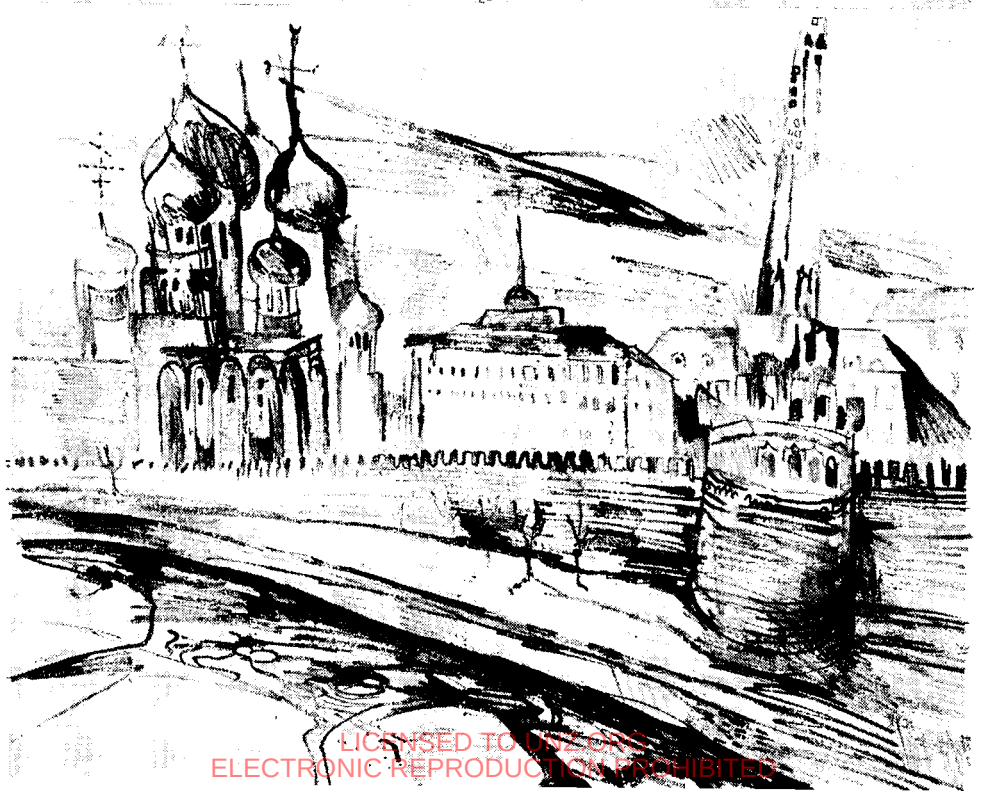
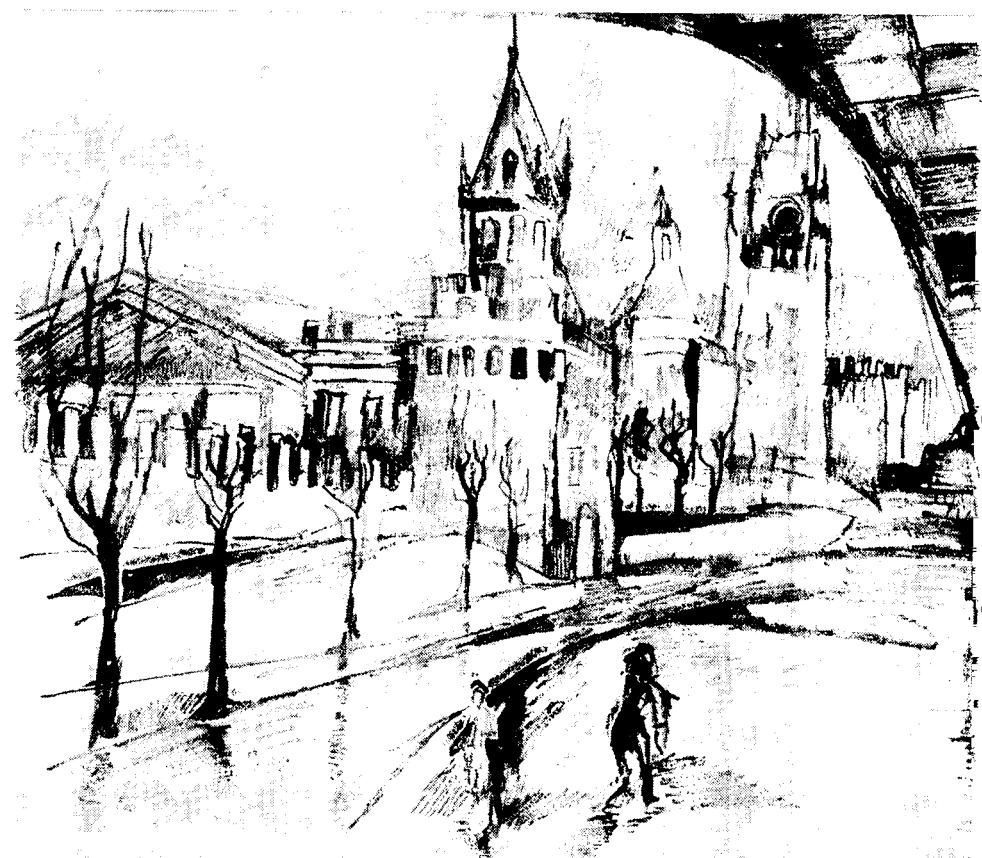
Winter will think back to your lit harvest
For which there is no help, and the seed
Of eloquence will open its wings
When you are gone.
But at this moment
When the nails are kissing the fingers good-bye
And my only
Chance is bleeding from me,
When my one chance is bleeding,
For speaking either truth or comfort
I have no more tongue than a wound.

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN

HARALD, THE AGNOSTIC
ALE-LOVING OLD SHEPHERD
ENEMY OF THE WHISKY-DRINKING
PLOUGHMEN AND HARVESTERS,
WALKS OVER THE SABBATH
HILL TO THE SHEARING

Two bells go pealing through my age,
Two mad majestic criers,
One celebrates the pastured saints,
One thunders of hell fires.
They storm at me with trembling mouths
And both of them are liars.

The barman had a little bell
That swayed my soul to peace
At ten last night.
 When the mad horns
Raged in the barley lees,
From up to bottom of my glass
Clung a shining fleece.



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THE ART OF FICTION XXVI

ILYA EHRENBURG

I telephoned Ilya Ehrenburg on my second day in Moscow, hoping to call on him, and perhaps to obtain an interview. I was adding one more request to the many he receives each day. "Ilya Grigorevitch has to be 'avaricious' with his time," his secretary said when I called. "He is so occupied... but I shall convey your request to him." Later, just as I returned to the Metropole, chilled but dazzled from a first walk along the windswept quais of the frozen Moskva River, the secretary called back to say that Ehrenburg had agreed to see me briefly. A date was set for the following week. I had good luck: Ehrenburg was in Moscow for a session of the Supreme Soviet, although he was soon due in Stockholm.

Ehrenburg lives and has his office on Gorki Street, four or five blocks from the Red Square, right in the center of town.

drawings by Olga Carlisle

Gorki Street, once well known as the Tverskaya, is Moscow's major thoroughfare. It is a wide, straight, commercial street where many of the city's principal stores stay open late into the evening. Ehrenburg's apartment is high up in a large modern building. Several other writers and artists live at the same address. The first floor of the building is occupied by a bookstore. On one side the store opens onto a tiny square where pigeons, seemingly undisturbed by the cold weather, surround a black bronze statue of Yuri Dolgoruki. They perch irreverently all over the modern oversized representation of the mythical founder of Moscow. In the middle of the small square he is riding a huge horse, his helmeted head bent. Across the square there is a café with a pink neon sign over the entrance—a good place to meet someone for lunch without getting involved in the slow service of the big Moscow hotels.

When I went to see Ehrenburg for the first time, there was a crowd of people both inside and around the bookstore, although it was quite late in the day. A book on Impressionism had gone on sale that week. The thick volume, with a Renoir lady holding a fan on the cover, was displayed in the store window.

Book stores are numerous in Moscow but usually very informally run and overcrowded. The books are piled everywhere in seeming disorder and avid shoppers press against counters laden with volumes. I had seen classics sold from make-shift tables on the snowy sidewalks. Crowds of modestly dressed Muscovites would line up in the sub-zero weather to purchase newly-published volumes still smelling of printers' ink.

But the bookstore on Gorki Street was more elaborate. Large and well-lighted, it had displays of books against a background of brightly painted pegboard. Inside, the various counters were clearly marked—Education, Sciences, Art—and the store was provided with an adequate number of sales-people. A vast assortment of art postcards filled an entire corner of the store. Most of them were genre paintings out of Russian museums. There were many all-time favorites, familiar even to me despite my alien education: Shishkin's

Family of Bears, and *Princess Tarakanova* perishing in her prison. (She was an unfortunate rival of Empress Elizabeth II, drowned in the Peter and Paul fortress by a spring flood of the Neva. She is shown in her dungeon cringing on her bed in terror as the waters rise around her.) But I also noticed several reproductions of Impressionist work. The Impressionists, no longer considered "decadent" by the authorities, are becoming increasingly popular in the Soviet Union. The magnificent French canvases from the Moscow and Leningrad museums are now proudly displayed. Groups of viewers gather in front of the brilliant Monets and Gauguins and stand there for a long time, looking sometimes in bewilderment but more often in rapture.

When I left the store, I realized that it was later than I had thought. It was already the time set for the appointment. The sun was setting on Moscow.

Number 8 Gorki Street is a compound of buildings rather than one house. The layout is typical of Moscow, with several doorways off an inner courtyard. The courtyard was unlit and deserted, with only a few small paths dug through the snow, leading to several unmarked doors. A wall topped by an old rusted grillwork enclosed one side of the courtyard. I had a glimpse of a panorama—invisible from Gorki Street, like so many views of Moscow which one finds by accident—at the end of an old alley, between high fences. There were snowy roofs, tall reddish brick walls and suddenly an old log house, a vestige of another age. All this in irregular clusters broken by white spaces, houses set at strange angles, a feeling of casualness special to Moscow.

As is customary in this city, there was no listing of tenants or apartments to be seen anywhere. If one happens to know the number of the apartment for which one is looking, chances of finding it are fair. Otherwise one has to turn to the women wrapped in shawls who doze, sitting in the darkness, near the elevator. These somber old women seem deliberately to forget the names of the tenants. They are, or pretend to be, deaf to one's questions. They refuse either to be wakened from their slumber or interrupted in their knitting. Perhaps their

withdrawal is a vestige of earlier, darker days when people wanted to preserve their anonymity as much as possible. Or was it my slight foreign accent that put them on their guard?

If one does not know the stairway number of a particular apartment the best thing to do is to go out and telephone. Otherwise the search may turn into a Kafkaesque dream—dark stairways, cold unkempt landings, wrong doors, broken bells, crawling ancient elevators which these melancholy women in their many-layered grey shawls unwillingly operate with a special key.

I searched for the right entrance, distressed at the thought of being late at Ehrenburg's. He had the reputation of being one of the busiest of all the Muscovite writers. I had not allowed enough time for the usual search.

Taking a desperate guess, I selected at random one stairway entrance. To my relief, it turned out to be the right one, and soon a maid was letting me into Ehrenburg's warm apartment. An irascible small dog inspected me and retired, after barking once or twice.

I found myself in an apartment whose decor was totally unlike the typical Moscow dwelling. It was simple, airy, and reminded me of the home of a well-to-do artistic Parisian intellectual. It was unencumbered, the furniture comfortable and inconspicuous. The drawings and paintings were mostly French. They bore friendly inscriptions to Ehrenburg from the artists. There were many black-and-whites by Picasso which gave the place an overall luminosity. Here and there a Chagall, a Léger, added a note of vibrant color, matched by the brightly patterned scatter-rugs and the cushions on the sofa which were covered with handwoven folk materials—purple, deep blue, yellow. The pictures covered the walls of the living room and continued on into a hall and an adjoining room seen through a half-open door.

Mme. Ehrenburg, Lubov Mihailovna, greeted me. She is statuesque, dark-haired, and still beautiful, and was dressed with an understated elegance which is rare in Moscow. She is affable but reserved, and slow in her movements. She received me with friendliness. Years before, she had met my father in

Berlin and remembered him as a handsome poet with black hair. Known for her painting, Mme. Ehrenburg once studied with the Russian "constructivist" Rodchenko. The two small canvases which she later showed at my insistence were painted not too long ago in an Expressionist manner and were quite charming. Sensing my interest, she led me around the place most readily. She took a few additional works out of a closet, several Léger lithographs from the series "Les Constructeurs."

Compared to Moscow's wintry existence, with its soft diffused light and its lack of visual richness in clothes and furnishings, these works looked sparkling. The French workers in bright blue overalls carrying yellow and red rafters; Picasso's fauns and nude girls dancing—one could almost hear the tambourines and hoofbeats. Ehrenburg had several drawings and lithographs of the master's unsurpassed series of the early nineteen-fifties. A thoughtful Gipsy, a Spaniard draped in a dark cloak, a playful monkey, looked down from the wall. I had a sudden yearning for the lightheartedness of the Latins, and also for their serenity; in my few days in Moscow I had become aware of the moody Russian intensity—people deeply concerned with the future of their country and of the world, filled at once with high hopes and high indignation. The Picasso girls—an Infanta in a big white collar, a young mother—looked so at one with the world, so completely at peace. There were also Russian works here and there. I noticed an early Chagall self-portrait, severe and incisive, painted in Russia during the artist's early and strongest period. In the small bedroom Mme. Ehrenburg showed me a later Chagall, a small nude, more luxuriant in color. Its pinks were complemented by a beautiful ikon. I remembered how moved Matisse was by ikons when I saw next to it an imaginary portrait of Ilya Ehrenburg as a child, joyous only as a Matisse can be.

Mme. Ehrenburg took obvious pleasure in showing me some Picasso jewelry made of clay, her collection of scarves designed by Léger, Matisse, and Picasso in commemoration of various political rallies. She told me the story of a fragment of sculpture standing in the living room. It was found by a

student, a friend and protege of her husband, shortly after the Revolution in the vicinity of the Zubov estate, a well-known eighteenth-century palace. A crowd of little boys were kicking the stone around, and the student rescued it. Later, despite Ehrenburg's efforts to save him, this student died of tuberculosis. Ehrenburg inherited the sculpture. It has a Greek inscription on one of its sides but Ehrenburg had never found time to have it examined by an expert. While a sad memory is linked to it, he is especially fond of this sculpture. It has a classical air which blended with the Mediterranean atmosphere of the place.

We talked about collecting—what a strong impulse it is, especially among Russians, and despite the crowded conditions in which so many of them live. Mme. Ehrenburg told me of several art collections that she had seen recently, of works modern and old, assembled by people in modest circumstances. She mentioned some of the problems of preserving and displaying her husband's collection. Gorki Street, one of the city's main bus routes, is a heavily travelled street in Moscow. Parades frequently march up Gorki Street on the way to the Red Square, trucks shake the walls of the buildings. The walls are thin, and the plaster sometimes falls off in big pieces. Paintings tumble down, their glass and frames shattered into pieces. Mme. Ehrenburg had recently devised a system for supporting them safely: a thin tubing, painted the same white as the walls, is attached to the ceiling and runs all around the room. The pictures are hung from it, sometimes in clusters of two or three black-and-whites on top of each other. Indeed they were assembled with taste, and marvelously suited to each other. The collection of old Russian and Ukrainian ceramic toys on a shelf resembled the Picasso fauns. It brought small whimsical animals right into the room: brightly striped rams with immense curved horns, small horses, imaginary beasts, all hoofs and horns. Soon Ehrenburg's secretary came in. He was ready to see me for a while—not for long, as he was expecting someone else soon. I overheard the name of Boris Slutzky, a well-known Soviet poet.

Ilya Ehrenburg is rather tall, slightly bent by age, with a mop of hair which was well-known in his Montparnasse days (he once had a postcard safely delivered to him at the Rotonde with only "To the man with his hair uncombed" as an address). His hair is now a dark gray with white streaks. It was late in the day and he looked tired. His eyes were exceedingly sharp and yet somehow incurious. As I stepped into his study I saw a drawing of him on the far wall. It was a pencil portrait, inscribed: *Pour toi mon ami, Picasso 29 août 1948*. Small as this sketch was, both Ehrenburg's intelligence and his coldness were captured. A few pencil strokes, and everything about Ehrenburg was there: a slightly brooding expression, what the French call *le regard lourd*, something also of a bird of prey. Picasso had caught him in a moment of inner concentration, but there is nothing introverted or talmudic about Ehrenburg. Rather he looks like a hardened old warrior, as one would imagine the chieftain of a Caucasian mountain tribe described by Lermontov.

It is a strange feeling to have a person's very essence displayed thus on the wall, to be able to check with it as the acquaintance progresses. Once or twice during our conversation I looked towards the portrait. I began to feel that there were three people in the room: Ehrenburg, myself, and this other Ehrenburg, Picasso's, a younger man, perhaps more of a cynic.

Actually there is something attractive in Ehrenburg's hauteur: he does not smile, there is no display of friendliness or interest on his part, no hostility either. I sensed that he found me an inexperienced conversationalist, but he was patient. I was intimidated, but progressively my uneasiness vanished. I became absorbed in observing my host.

It seemed to me that I understood the significance of a man who until then was mostly a name to me, a name I had often heard mentioned since childhood. I had read his novels without quite being able to form an image of their author. Suddenly I thought I knew how Ehrenburg, without a profusion of artistic gifts but with exceptional intelligence and critical sense, came to be an important writer. He has far

surpassed the role of man of letters; he has that self-confidence, that arrogance perhaps, which makes a man presumptuous enough to believe that he has something to say to the world, not through an occasional flash of creativity but through persistent effort, long enough to build a life's work. Ehrenburg is not a great writer, probably because his imagination is limited, but he is a very serious writer. He has understood and lived the ideas and the events of his epoch, and has persevered in recording them.

The conversation turned to the interview which Ehrenburg had given Norman Cousins, the editor of the *Saturday Review* shortly before my visit to Moscow. I had read it with interest. It revolved around the relationship of writers with their readers, both in the United States and in the USSR. Ehrenburg's interest in his readers is well known. Alfred Kazin remarked recently that "it was in the spirit of TV popularity," to boost his own ego, that Ehrenburg emphasized the extent of his following among the Soviet people. In actual fact, far from frivolous, Ehrenburg's reference to his readers is a calculated attempt to create a new force in Russia besides the established political and academic channels. He is trying to encourage the public to form opinions, to make itself heard, in letters, in newspapers and in meetings. Perhaps it takes a Russian to measure how sincere and how well-advised the pedagogical impulse is among the majority of Russian writers.

Lamps were turned on in Ehrenburg's study. It was a small comfortable room located on the courtyard side of the apartment, the quieter side. Two windows looked high over Moscow. There were books everywhere, and a wide blue couch along one of the walls. Ehrenburg sat in a deep, green chair near the desk. I settled on the edge of the couch. I was looking at Ehrenburg's profile, his slightly stooped massive figure against the window behind him, through which the bluish snowy late day was still visible.

Our conversation during this first visit revolved mostly around Russian painting. The subject of a writer's political and social responsibility, linked in my mind with Ehrenburg's

whole career, was not touched upon. I was under the spell of the art works which I had just seen. I was charmed with what I saw of Ehrenburg's collection. I had been in Moscow long enough to realize that it was often impossible to communicate with Russians on matters of art appreciation; people whose taste in books or music was very akin to my own spoke a different language when it came to painting. But then, Ehrenburg had witnessed in Paris the most important developments in the art of our century. His taste is of a kind acquired only in painter's studios, through intimate association with the painters themselves. At one time, in Paris, he had painted a little himself.

I looked around Ehrenburg's study—a room even more French than the other rooms, with rare leather-bound editions and white French editions of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* mixed with the hardbound Russian volumes all around the walls (Ehrenburg owns an edition of Ronsard published in 1579). There were two paintings of Paris hanging near the desk, a small Marquet representing the quais of the Seine, and a street scene by Robert Falk—painted in soft, nostalgic colors. Ehrenburg told me that almost all the works he owned were presents from the artists, and that he had more paintings in his country house. I mentioned my lack of knowledge of Russian contemporary art. He recommended I see a show of portraits then being held by the Painters' Union. It was a "closed" show; only members of the Painters' Union and a few invited guests were admitted. It had been assembled "for purposes of study for the members of the Union."

Ehrenburg gave me at random the names of the painters whose works I should look for while visiting museums and collections. He took me around the apartment to give me a chance to examine once more the Russian works he owned. In addition to the two Chagalls I admired a romantic portrait of a girl in a big hat by Alexander Tishler, somehow reminiscent of Eugene Berman. (Like Berman, Tishler is well-known for his stage sets. Tishler is originally from Kiev, where there was a lively school of painting in the early '20's. Subsequently

several of its members worked for the theater.) I saw a lovely head by the sculptress Sarah Lebedeva, whom Ehrenburg suggested I see in her studio. Next, Ehrenburg unrolled an unstretched, red cubistic composition by David Shterenberg, a friend of his during the Montparnasse years. It was a characteristic cubistic still life, a fish and a wire *panier à salade*, but it had a Russian, exuberant sense of design. I then stopped near the Parisian scene by Robert Falk, another Paris-trained Russian painter. Ehrenburg said that Falk's soft, luminous paintings of nature, his lyric still lifes, look their best in the country, surrounded with greenery and flowers in bloom; Ehrenburg's country house has a heated verandah, and year-round gardening is one of his favorite pastimes.

He also spoke about Sarian, an Armenian painter whom he particularly liked, and about a whole group of artists working in Armenia, mostly colorists inspired by the landscape and the southern light.

I asked Ehrenburg whether he could tell me anything about the younger painters in Moscow? Did he know of anybody with outstanding talent? He led me back to his study and sat again in the green chair. "Unfortunately, young Russian artists are in a difficult position today," he said, in his articulate, patient manner. "Painting, like all other arts, rests on a continuity of experience. More than anything, young painters and sculptors need to know the works of their immediate elders. Such a continuity does not exist here to a sufficient degree in the visual arts. The once flourishing Russian school of painting suffered from too many upheavals. Thus our younger artists lack a tradition which is essential to their growth. It is imperative that our better artists be exhibited more widely for the sake of their younger colleagues. I am happy to say," he went on, "that there were recent showings of Robert Falk, of David Shterenberg, of the watercolorist Von Vizin. Everything should be done to present more good foreign art to Soviet audiences. I feel that one great contribution in this direction was made by the large Picasso show held in Moscow in 1956. But as far as the painters of your generation are concerned, too often I find their works tentative."

There was a muted shuffling and the noise of barking in the hall. Evidently, my host's next visitor had arrived. His secretary entered the room. I stood up. Ehrenburg must have seen the look of disappointment on my face. He knew I had come to talk to him about literary techniques—a subject we did not have time to touch on. He said he would give me, if he could, some more of his time. I thanked him for his kindness. We shook hands and I left.

Outside his apartment the evening was dark blue and cold.

The bookstore was still full of animation, but the pigeons had deserted Yuri Dolgoruki, a dark mass against the sky. I walked to the cafe across the square and ordered a supper of tea, caviar and oranges.

The promised interview was postponed several times—Ehrenburg was especially busy because of the Supreme Soviet. As days and weeks elapsed I began to fear that it would not take place at all. In the meantime I tried to find out just what my Muscovite acquaintances thought about Ehrenburg. I soon realized that he was almost universally respected among the painters and the poets for the excellence of his taste. As a writer he seemed better liked for his essays than his novels, although those who had read *Julio Jurenito* greatly admired it. His role as a cultural intermediary with France was well-known and his influence in this domain believed to be strong and highly beneficent—as it reflects the profound Russian empathy for France. But Ehrenburg had a wider audience, about which I heard for the first time from students at the University of Moscow. I was told that shortly before my visit to Moscow a tremendous controversy had rocked Soviet public opinion—in fact, it was still going on here and there in newspapers. In October 1959 Ehrenburg published an article in the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. (The *Komsomolskaya Pravda* is a daily newspaper devoted primarily to the Soviet youth, that is, to the Komsomols, the young people who undertake the first step towards becoming Party members by joining the Communist youth organization. In recent years to become a Komsomol has lost some of its political significance as the num-

ber of Komsomols has vastly increased. Today the 3,400,000 readers of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* are recruited among all layers of Soviet society. One of the most popular features of this newspaper is the lively column of letters it prints from its readers.

Ehrenburg's article dealt with the relationship between the arts and the sciences and quoted a letter which he had recently received, signed "Nina." An anonymous young woman had just broken up with Youri, her fiancé, because he criticized and mocked her interest in the arts. He was himself a scientist, tolerant only of sciences. She was asking Ilya Ehrenburg's opinion: Was her passion for art an error? Is art as important as science? Does it have a place in a modern society? Ehrenburg's answer was of course that Youri was misled, that art was as alive and as needed as ever... It was a good instance of Ehrenburg's pedagogical role. His article started a gigantic polemic: the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* received thousands of letters, with only ten to fifteen percent of the readers on Youri's side. Nina became something of a symbol. The overwhelming majority of the readers felt that Youri had wronged her, that he was narrow-minded and misinformed. There were public meetings organized to discuss the problem. At one of them, held in a workers' club on "Avenue of the Enthusiasts" in Moscow—a thoroughfare leading east, to Siberia—named for the Revolutionaries who in Czarist times started their journey to exile by way of this road, Ehrenburg successfully confounded a well-known professor of the Moscow Institute of Cybernetics who spoke in favor of Youri's point of view. There were more letters, and in January Ehrenburg wrote another article to close the debate—triumphantly—for the humanistic point of view. The scope of the debate, its naiveté and its earnestness, were so Russian I thought that it might be interesting to ask Ehrenburg about it. When Ehrenburg's secretary called me to say that he could see me the next day, on the eve of his departure for Stockholm, I prepared a few questions revolving around this theme. I was tempted to approach the interview spontaneously, without questions prepared in advance, but remembering Ehrenburg's reserved manner I decided against

it. It might have been a mistake; should I have been less formal myself the ice might have been broken. But it wasn't.

The interview took place on the morning before his departure. We sat in the living room among all the Picassos. Ehrenburg was visibly preoccupied but he gave precise, rapidly spoken answers to my questions. I took notes as he went along. His secretary, a lovely, cultivated woman subsequently helped me transcribe my notes. He wanted his words recorded with complete exactness. The interview was interrupted by phone calls—one of them was from Ehrenburg's doctor. This was at the height of the Moscow plague scare: he had to be duly vaccinated before leaving the USSR. But every minute before his departure was accounted for, it seemed almost impossible to fit a doctor's appointment into his tight schedule. I felt that the hour that he devoted to me was a generous gesture on his part.

QUESTION

What is your point of view in the discussion which followed your article in the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*?

ANSWER

This point of view is clear. I didn't at all raise the question as to whether the arts were dying out with the development of the exact sciences. In the past, there has never been any antagonism between art and science. There were periods when the exact sciences were more developed than the arts, as in Hellenistic times. There were other periods when arts preceded science such as the Gothic period, or the early Renaissance. Then there were periods when both the arts and sciences flourished, as in the high Renaissance. Arts and sciences have never fought each other. The problem I was concerned with is that of excessive specialization. I have seen it among American technicians. My article was written to warn our youth about the dangers of one-sided growth. The role of the arts in society I would link closely with the problem of educating the sentiments—of *Education Sentimentale*. I must tell you that before my article was published there was a movement among

our youth to try to round out their education in this respect. A couple of years ago I attended the inauguration of the first Moscow "University of Culture" at one of the advanced technical institutions here. Young people studying electrical engineering assembled to form a club—the so-called "University of Culture"—to find out more about painting, music and the other arts. Such clubs are now being formed in every university.

In the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* I presented the letter of a young student who wrote that her friend, a young physicist, was cold to her and to his mother. He didn't understand her feelings for art. This letter, moving in its naive way, I prefaced with some of my own thoughts concerning the necessity of a many-sided development for the young. The great majority of letters brought about by this article—there were more than 8000 sent to the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*—defended the necessity of harmonious education, but the opposite point of view—that the arts belong in the background in our times—was also presented.

In my last article, entitled "The Education of Sentiments," I spoke of the need of developing the esthetic sense in our youth so that the new Soviet man would be able not only to know much but to feel deeply.

QUESTION

How do you reconcile the activities of a writer with those of a political figure?

ANSWER

This is closely related to your first question. I feel that in our time a poet should have an understanding of nuclear physics and a physicist should enjoy poetry. Of course science has become so advanced that a Goethe or a Leonardo, specialists in both the arts and sciences, are unfortunately inconceivable. But I cannot imagine a writer these days who would write a novel shut up in his study. I know they do exist. I think that they show how fruitless literary craft is unless the author actively experiences what happens to his hero. There is

Flaubert's view (this in his youth): "If you want to describe courage, do not become a soldier; a lover, do not fall in love; a drunkard, do not drink wine." There is also a brilliant refutation of this theory: Stendhal. He was a soldier, drank and made love, and was marvelously successful at describing a variety of human passions. I do not draw a line between my literary work and my political activity because I defend the same ideas in both. My public activity is directed toward the cause of peace and cultural collaboration between countries. I cannot understand why the defense of man against atomic death should be left to professional diplomats. It's as much a writer's concern, who is responsible to his readers for all the books written before him as well as those which will be written after him. I also do not understand why some feel that cultural exchanges should be put in the hands of political leaders who already have too much to attend to.

To tell you the truth, I find your question strange. I would like to ask you—or rather ask American writers: do they find it possible to "just be writers" at a time when it is necessary to both create and defend literature?

QUESTION

But isn't it practically difficult to conciliate writing with public service?

ANSWER

We are coming back to our first question. Some people assert that a present-day engineer cannot read novels or listen to music—he does not have time for those things. I want to remind you of a man whom I knew—you knew him too, I understand—and who has left his mark on modern science. I am thinking of Frédéric Joliot-Curie. He was able to write his last work about radioactivity from the notes of Pierre Curie, to direct the construction of a scientific research center, to be the president of the International Peace Council, to paint, to enjoy music—all in the same years. Evidently, our notion of time—of hours and days—is relative. Time narrows or expands according to how we approach it. It varies with a man's

breadth, with his heart. There is that American saying—time is money. Time can be many other things—it can be the immortality of the individual. His short mortal life may broaden not only in time but in space—as it expands into the life of society itself.

QUESTION

What do you think of the novel as a literary form—of its future?

ANSWER

It seems to me that the novel is very much alive as a form. Without any question, every epoch has its own forms, and the novel nowadays cannot resemble that of the nineteenth century. In this domain all experiments are justified, and it is better to write something new clumsily than to repeat the old brilliantly. In the nineteenth century, novels dealt with the fate of a person or of a family; this was linked to life in that period. In our time the destinies of people are interwoven. Whether man recognizes it or not, his fate is much more linked to that of many other people than it used to be. This modifies the architecture of the novel, where, as in the film, there is a succession of close-ups and of crowd shots. I have tried to approach novels in various ways, leaving the old notion of building up a character, on which traditional novels are based. I have written a satirical novel—which is made partly of an essay, partly of a survey, *Julio Jurenito*. Some of my other novels are conceived as chronicles of our times—but humanized chronicles, unlike chronicles by historians or sociologists. Such is my novel *The Second Day*.

In others, I have tried to approach my subject matter as a poet would do. In such cases, most important for me was not the fate of individual heroes, but rather a certain situation, a mood. Such are the *Summer of 1925* and *The Thaw*. But even in those novels which are more like classical novels—like *The Fall of Paris* and *The Tempest*—my attention was not concentrated on given heroes, but rather on those central elements which are the real heroes of those novels—Paris in the case of

The Fall of Paris, the war in *The Tempest*. I have already told you that in my opinion the most important thing for the writer was an ability to live the experiences of his heroes—to “co-experience” them. We must abandon the notion that a writer is only an observer—he is not a camera. He is expected to present that which is invisible at first. He must reveal the inner world of man, and that is possible only if the writer has experienced something similar to what he described. This is the only way for him to really understand his heroes. I hope this is not the case with your interviews, but unfortunately most undertakings of this kind are more concerned with tracing the prototypes of various characters of novels than with the psychology of creation. As an example, take Flaubert. Specialists of Flaubert have discovered eleven women who are supposed to be the prototypes of Emma Bovary, without stopping at the statement that “Emma is me” which Flaubert makes in one of his letters to his friend Kahn. More knowledge of the psychology of writing would enable readers to understand better the books they read.

QUESTION

Which will be in your opinion the new themes in Russian writing? War has been a main subject for many years. Do you foresee any changes?

ANSWER

I hope that there will be more novels about peace. But actually good books are always about man and it's not the subject matter which is important, but how an author approaches it.

As Ehrenburg went on dictating the answers to my questions, speaking slowly and distinctly, he became more elliptic, glancing from time to time at his watch. It was clear he felt the pressure of time. To questions about writers he liked he gave only the briefest of replies—Stendhal and Chekhov his favorites among the classical writers, Hemingway among the contemporaries. I closed my notebook. It was

apparent the informal interview was impossible. Four or five questions were what he expected, and had answered, as detached as a teacher giving dictation class. And yet afterwards, when I had said goodbye and left 8 Gorki Street for the last time, I found myself impressed by the directness of his answers, his attitude of deep conviction. His voice is not unlike his writing—cerebral, direct, factual, instructive. It is true that his manner—somewhat chilly despite his long-dated acquaintance with my father—prevented me from really communicating with him. And yet despite the fact that I had been presented only with one facet of the writer—polished and hard—I could sense the greatness in him. He is, after all, almost the only writer from his Revolutionary generation left—shaped by the fight against Czarism, by exile and two World Wars. Aside from his gifts as a novelist, perhaps his greatest distinction will come with the publication of his memoirs, *People, Years, Life*, which began appearing in the literary journal *Novii Mir* shortly after my meeting with him. The success of these memoirs is enormous in the Soviet Union. For readers who are his contemporaries, Ehrenburg recreates the atmosphere and the ideas of their youth. The memoirs are studded with eloquent pages defending the memory of Ehrenburg's contemporaries: Marina Tsvetayeva, Mandelstam, Pasternak, Babel, Meyerhold, Tatlin. For the younger Soviet reader Ehrenburg opens up a new world of pre-Revolutionary struggles, of Montparnasse Bohemia, of modern art, and he brings to long-deprived readers whole segments of today's sensibility: Stendhal, Picasso, Modigliani, Apollinaire, Pasternak. To the non-Russian, Ehrenburg gives the most vivid picture to date, even if fragmentary, of the making of the last Revolutionary generation. The work has the unexpected universality that a subjective but deeply-felt account sometimes can acquire.

The importance of this fact of Ehrenburg's seeming obligation to share his own life—rich in events and interesting friendships—with Soviet readers cannot be stressed too much. Russians, especially the younger ones, tend to be alienated from two aspects of life which we take for granted: a knowl-

edge of the past and a knowledge of foreign countries. Ehrenburg's sense of artistic responsibility towards his readers can do much to alleviate such a condition. Philip Toynbee, in a recent review of Ehrenburg's novel *The Spring*, wrote "... I suspect that he knows what he is doing. I suspect that he is writing quite deliberately as an educator; that he is sacrificing his own talent for the sake of the future. And if this is the case should we who live in a society where artistic freedom is taken for granted mock or despise his attempts to bring greater freedom to his own country? I don't think we should..."

—OLGA CARLISLE

(This is the twenty-sixth of a series of interviews on the Art of Fiction. Other writers interviewed are Ernest Hemingway, E. M. Forster, Alberto Moravia, Henry Green, William Faulkner, and many others. Future issues will contain interviews with Jean Cocteau, Kingsley Amis, and Mary McCarthy. The Marianne Moore interview follows T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, and Robert Lowell in a series of interviews on the Art of Poetry. Ezra Pound and W.H. Auden will be interviewed in the future.)

A Portfolio of Russian Poetry

Collected and Edited by Olga Carlisle

In his memoirs, Ehrenburg—a recognized arbiter of taste in the Soviet Union—speaks enthusiastically about the Twenties. He calls that period “the era of poetry,” contrasting it with our times, which boast only “a day of poetry” (an annual event when young Moscow poets sell their autographed books in the streets of Moscow). This portfolio includes a poem by Andrei Vozneisenski, a light-hearted poet now in his early twenties. Ehrenburg considers him to be the most promising poet of the younger generation. The rest of the portfolio is devoted to poets born in the eighteen-eighties: Boris Pasternak, Anna Ahmatova, Ossip Mandelstam, Marina Tsvetayeva are represented here. (Only Vladimir Mayakovsky is excluded as many of his poems have recently been made available in translations).

Boris Pasternak needs no introduction. He is generally considered to be the best Russian poet of this century.

Anna Ahmatova is highly appreciated by lovers of Russian poetry. She is the only one still living among the members of “the era of poetry” generation. Her poetic voice, always restrained and feminine, has steadily grown in excellence and force.

Marina Tsvetayeva is the most original among the poets of that time. She created a completely new rhythmic, elliptic, sonorous style which now influences many young Soviet poets. Pasternak said of her that she was a woman with a man’s soul. She committed suicide during World War II.

Ossip Mandelstam is the least known in America among the poets presented. The poems here are part of a book of translations now in preparation. He was a refined, intensely personal poet, a member of the Acmeist school as was Ahmatova. (It was a loosely linked group of poets opposed in spirit to the vagueness of Sym-

bolism.) Mandelstam published only four small volumes of hermetic neo-classic poems, but those poems are one of the high moments in Russian poetry. Behind the intricate personal imagery there is an acute sense of our time.

While living in Crimea, which inspired many of his poems, Mandelstam had a close personal relationship with Ilya Ehrenburg. In his memoirs Ehrenburg describes Mandelstam as he knew him: "He was small, frail. His head, topped by a tuft of red hair, was thrown back on his shoulders. He loved the image of the rooster near the Acropolis tearing the night with his cry: he himself resembled a young rooster when he recited his solemn odes in his soft bass voice.

*...what is promised by the cry of the rooster
Or flames on the far Acropolis?
Or why, when the lazy oxen munch
In their stable, gazing at nothing at all,
This rooster, herald of some new life
Claps his wings on the city wall...*"

BORIS PASTERNAK

Adapted by Robert Lowell

MEPHISTOPHELES

Every Sunday they left a circus of dust behind them,
as they poured out on the turnpike in stately, overcrowded
carriages,
and the showers found nobody at home,
and trampled through the bedroom windows.

It was a custom at these staid Sunday dinners
to serve courses of rain instead of roast-beef;
on the baroque sideboard, by the Sunday silver,
the wind cut corners like a boy on a new bicycle.

Upstairs, the curtain-rods whirled, untouched;
the curtains rose like a salvo to the ceiling.
Outside the burghers kept losing themselves,
they showed up chewing straws by cow-ponds.

Later, when the long cortege of carriages
approached the city wall,
the horses shied
from the shadow of the Gothic gallows.

The devil in blood-red stockings with rose rosettes
danced along the sunset-watered road—
he was as red
as a boiling lobster.

One thought a snort of indignation
had ripped the lid of heaven
from the skyline's low vegetation;
the devil's ribbons fluttered and danced.

The carriages swam through his eyes like road-signs;
he scarcely lifted a finger in greeting.
He rolled on his heels, he rumbled with laughter,
he sidled off hugging Faust, his pupil.

THE SEASONS

I

Now the small buds are pronged
to the boughs like candle-butts.
Steaming April! The adolescent park
simmers.

Like a lassoed buffalo, the forest
is noosed in the ropes of shrill feathered throats—
a wrestler, all gratuitous muscle,
caught in the pipes of the grand organ.

The shadows of the young leaves are gummy.
A wet bench streams in the garden.
Poetry is like a pump
with a suction-pad that drinks and drains up

the clouds. They ruffle in hoop-skirts,
talk to the valleys—
all night I squeeze out verses,
my page is hollow and white with thirst.

II

The garden's frightful—all drip and listening.
The rain is loneliness.
A branch splashes white lace on the window.
Is there a witness?

The earth is swollen and smelly,
the pasture is a sponge;
as if it were August, the far off night ripens
and rots in the elm-dissected field.

No sound. No trespasser watches the night.
The rain is alone in the garden—
it starts up again, it drips
off roof and gutter.

I will drink the rain,
I, loneliness...
the rain weeps in the darkness.
Is there a witness?

But silence! Not even a wrinkling leaf.
No sign in the darkness,
only a swallowing of sobs and the swish of slippers...
in the interval, earth choking its tears...

III

Summer says goodbye to the station.
Running in its photographer's black hood,
and blinding us with flash-bulbs, the thunder
takes a hundred souvenir snap-shots.

The lilac bush is a black scarecrow.
From hill and sky armfuls of lightning
crash on the station-agent's cottage
to smash it with light.

Waves of malevolence
lift the coal-dust from the roof;
the rain, coming down in buckets,
is like charcoal that smudges a drawing.

Something in my mind's
most inaccessible corners
registers the thunder's illumination,
stands up, and steadily blinks.

IV

A driving rain whips the air.
The ice is scabby gray. You wait
for the sky to wake up.
Snow drones on the wind.

With unbuckled galoshes, with a muffler
flapping from his unbuttoned coat,
March bulls ahead, and makes rushes
at the frivolous, frenzied birds.

The season cannot miss you. It tries
to scrape up the candle-drippings in a snotty handkerchief—
it is safe now
to snatch off the night-caps of the tulips...

He is out of his senses, he musses his mop of hair.
He is buried in his mind's mush,
and stammers scurrilities
against me—my resurrection in the spring.

V

Pinecones pop in the military gloom of our bedroom.
A gray smog boils in the overtime lightbulb.
The blue window simmers
over the snow-desert.
Our lips puff and stick.

Spring! I leave the street of astonished pines,
alarmed distances,
the awkward classical wooden house, apprehending its
downfall—
the air blue as piles of faded sky-blue denim
lugged by the prisoners from their wards!

The age is breaking—pagan Rome,
thumbs down on clowns,
the wrestler's vain swansong to the grandstand—
on the true!
The overpaid gladiator must die in earnest.

ANNA AHMATOVA

Translated by Richard Wilbur

LOT'S WIFE

The just man followed then his angel guide
Where he strode on the black highway, hulking and bright;
But a wild grief in his wife's bosom cried,
Look back, it is not too late for a last sight

*Of the red towers of your native Sodom, the square
Where once you sang, the gardens you shall mourn,
And the tall house with empty windows where
You loved your husband and your babes were born.*

She turned, and looking on the bitter view
Her eyes were welded shut by mortal pain;
Into transparent salt her body grew,
And her quick feet were rooted in the plain.

Who would waste tears upon her? Is she not
The least of our losses, this unhappy wife?
Yet in my heart she will not be forgot
Who, for a single glance, gave up her life.

TO N. V. RIKOV-GUKOVSKI

All is despoiled, abandoned, sold;
Death's wing has swept the sky of color;
All's eaten by a hungry dolor.
What is this light which we behold?

Odors of cherry-blossom sigh
From the rumored forest beyond the town.
At night, new constellations crown
The high, clear heavens of July.

Closer it comes, and closer still
To houses ruinous and blind:
Some marvellous thing yet undivined,
A fiat of the century's will.

OSSIP MANDELSTAM

Translated by Rose Styron and Olga Carlisle

From POEMS

Through the wild herd of horses, the streets of night,
I shall be rushing
Seeking a blossoming alder branch in a black springed sleigh,
For a bonnet of snow I shall be searching, for the endless
mill-wheel noise.

I remember a chestnut strand of hair—as a misfired shot,
Smoked through with bitterness, keeps that slight acidity
of ants—
And on my lips remains a dryness like amber.

In these moments even the air seems to me brown.
The edge of my sight is dressed in a gown of softness
And all that I know of apple-pink skin.

And still the runners of the drawn sleigh scrape
And through its woven canvas shine the sharp rays of the
sky
And hooves strike the pavement like frozen keys.

The only light is from the spiny untruth of the stars.
Life floats by, a foam-white bonnet, and there is no one
Left to listen: 'through the wild herd of horses, the
streets of night...'

—1925

From TRISTIA

Come celebrate, kinsmen, the twilight of freedom,
The darkening conscience, the great year obscured;
Into the boiling waters of nightfall
A heavy forest of nets is let down.
The days of your rising are numb,
O sun, judge, people!

Into battle legions we have tied the swallows.
Day is invisible, the whole element
Sings, whirrs, lives...
Between the nets clouded with twilight
The sun is dark and the land goes sailing.

Those who have heart must know, O time,
Your boat is sinking to the bottom.

Still, let us try a turn of the wheel—
Clumsy, rasping, enormous—
Dividing the ocean like a driven plough,
We will remember when Lethe is frozen
That life to us was worth ten heavens.

—1918



Sisters—weight and tenderness—your signs are so alike!
Bees and wasps suck at a heavy rose.
A man dies, the heated sand cools down
And on a black litter yesterday's sun is carried out.

Ah! heavy honeycombs and tender nets,
To lift a stone is lighter than to repeat your name.
I have but one care left on earth: a golden care:
How to live out the yoke of time.

I drink the air, troubled, like a dark water,
And time is tilled with a plough, and the rose was earth.
In a slow whirlpool heavy tender roses
Roses, weight and tenderness, woven into double wreaths,
—1920

Take for joy from my outstretched palms
A little honey and a little sun
As we were implored by the bees of Proserpine.

No one can loose a boat that is unmoored.
No one can hear the shadow shod in fur.
One cannot track down fear in the dense forest of life.

We are left only with kisses,
Prickling like tiny fuzzy bees
Which die, having left the hive.

In the translucent underbrush of night they rustle...
Their homeland: Taygeta's impenetrable wood,
Their nourishment: clover, and mint, and Time.

Take for joy, then, my wild present,
This simple necklace of dry dead
Bees who turned their honey into sun.

—1920

And since I have not known how to keep your hands,
And I have betrayed your tender salty lips,
I must wait for dawn in this dense acropolis.
How I hate the weeping of the ancient logs.

The Achaean men in the dark prepare their horse,
With strong-toothed saws they cut into the walls.
There is no way to ease the dry agitation of the blood
And for you there is no name, no sound, no image.

That you'd return. How could I think this? How did I dare?
Why did I tear myself from you before our time?
Darkness has not dissolved, nor the rooster cried
And into the wood the hot axe has not yet sunk.

Like a transparent tear on the walls, the sap is rising
And the city feels its scaffold wooden ribs,
But toward the stairs blood races, now climbs upward,
For three times heroes dreamed of the tempting Helen.

Where is fair Troy? What of the gilded palace?
It will be downed, that high bird-house of Priam.
And the arrows fall like a dry wooden rain
And the arrows grow on the ground like chestnut trees.

The sting of the last star painlessly fades;
A gray swallow, morning taps at the window,
And the slow day, like an ox waking in the straw
From these rough bales moves out of a long sleep.

—1920



I have forgotten the word I wanted to say.
The swallow returns on its blind sheared wings
To the palace of shadows, to transparent friends—
In oblivion a night song is being sung.

The birds do not carol, nor the immortal blossom,
The manes of the night horses fade from sight;
On the dry river an empty craft floats
And among the crickets, the word is lost.

Yet slowly it grows, as a tent, as a temple,
And now plays at being mad Antigone
Or falls at my feet like a dying swallow
With Stygian tenderness and a twig of green.

Ah, to recapture those live seeing fingers!
The first recognitions—their sculpted joy!
I fear the weeping of Aonian maids,
The fog, the ringing, the void.

Our mortal power is passion and knowledge.
Through men's fingers flows even sound,
But I have forgotten what I meant to say
And the bodiless thought returns to the shadow land.

The shade keeps speaking, but her meaning is wrong—
She's still the swallow, the flirt, Antigone,
And on my lips like a black ice burns
The remembrance of Stygian ringing.

—1920

From STONE

I shall not see the famous *Phédre*
In the ancient theatre crowned with tiers,
Its gallery rising smoky, high,
Half-lit by melting chandeliers
And while the players' wasted airs
Reap the sweet harvest of applause,
Indifferent, I shall not hear their feathery
Double-rhyming, light as gauze:

How those veils have wearied me...

Theater of Racine! A powerful barrier
Separates us from another land;
Moved by its own deep pulsing folds
The giant curtain between us stands
And the classic mantle falls from their shoulders
And molten, suffering, their voice grows strong;
In the furnace of fury, tempered at last,
The word is sounded: a hard sad gong.

I am late for the feast of Racine

Again the sere old posters rustle,
The scents of orange peel faintly rise,
And roused as from a lethargy of years
My sudden neighbor, stretching, sighs:
'Melpomone's folly exhausts me so,
My quest for peace in life renews.
Let us go, before the spectator-jackals
Come to tear apart the muse!'

If the Greeks could see our games...

—1915

O sky, sky, I will dream of you!
Surely you are not fully blind
And the day has not burned like a white page...
A trace of smoke, cinders on the ground.

—1911

I did not look in moments of blossoming,
Cassandra, for your lips, Cassandra, for your eyes,
But now December, somber, watches
And in remembrance, torture lies...

—1917

Depriving me of sea, of a space to run and space to fly,
And giving my footsteps the brace of a forced land,
What have you gained? The calculation dazzles,
But you cannot seize the movement of my lips, their silent
sound.

—1935

MARINA TSVETAYEVA

translated by Rose Styron and Olga Carlisle

From EARLY POEMS

A day will come, lamenting, I hear,
When bright no longer with thrones, fires, tears,
My eyes which once incandescent ruled
By alien pennies shall be cooled
And like an image, its double found,
Through my face will appear a face profound.

Pilgrim, in the distance I shall see
Your coming, extending your hand to me
On the black path, nor shall my hand
Withdraw, which I now defend.
For the first time I shall be giving
Your kisses back, O living.

In the radiance of well-being, then
Nothing will make me blush again;
Wrapped in a gown of white lustre,
It will be for me a holy Easter.

Along the abandoned Moscow street
I'll ride, and you will walk in the quiet
Beside me; each lump of earth will thud
Loudly on the coffin's lid
And at last will be resolved the schemes,
The self-loving lonely dreams.

Forgive, Lord, perished from pride,
Marina, nobility's newest bride.

—1916

From THE PUPIL

Tousle-haired star
Hurrying into nothing
Out of a horrid nowhere
A lone sheep among the starry horde,
Into those golden flocks rushing
Like jealousy you overwhelm me, star
Of the ancients, shaggy star!

—1921

Soul, scorning all measure,
Singer of heresy, martyr
Longing for the whip's lashing,
Soul, you greet your assassin
Like a butterfly fresh from its chrysalis,
Nor can you brook this offense:
That wizards are not still burnt.
Smoking under your hair shirt
Like a resinate high wick,
Screeching heretic,
Sister of Savanarola,
Soul,
You deserve the stake!

—1921.

From SEPARATION

Tighter and tighter wringing my hands
Till they be riven—
Between us are not the miles of earth
But the rivers of heaven,
Of separation, the azure lands
Where my friend is forever
Inalienable.
The highway dashes
In silvery harness;
My hands are not wrung now
But open, reaching
Soundlessly,
Like the ash tree climbing
After a flight of cranes.
To fly like the cranes and not look back!
Haughtiness
Would be mine, and in death's country
In costly dress
I would arrive, to your fleet feathers
A last buttress
In the airy losses of space.

—1921

I know, I know
That earth's enchantment—
This carved
Charmed cup—
Is no more ours
Than air is ours
Than stars
Than nests
Suspended in the dawn.

I know, I know
It has a master.
Still, like a towering
Eagle rising
High
With your wing
Purloin this cup.
From the cold pink lips
Of God.

—1921

From THE ADOLESCENT

The grapes in the royal garden have rusted
And the concubine, waiting, sleeps by the wall.
Veins of Palestine, heavy with sap,
In you flows the ancient sadness of Saul.

Like a five-day-old wound his mouth crusts over—
Thick moves the blood with its term at hand.
How long it has been since King Saul felt like singing!
How long since his eye has probed the land.

The roses of Jericho burn on his temples,
Like bellows his chest heaves, working its load,
And they drag, and they drag, their souls all sighing,
The young men of Palestine with their black blood.

—1921

From MARINA

How they flare up, like a tinder bonfire
On the plaza of night, our holy convictions!
Before the usurping edict of tenderness
What are our heroes, our marble traditions?

How solemnly fall the lofty antiques
One by one, and the habits of purity
And, oh, our ancestral jewels under
The blow of that king-pretender: pity.

The simpler gesture: to bend our heads
Aware that lowliness has us in harness
Down along the precipitous slope,
The irresistible incline of tenderness.

—1921

From PRAISE TO APHRODITE

No more so rich are the gifts of the gods.
On the shores of a different river now
Through wide and widening sunset gates
The doves of Venus fly away

And I, stretched out on the cooling sand,
Soon into numberless days shall go forth.
Like a snake looking back at his old bright skin,
I have outgrown my youth.

—1921

ANDREI VOZNEISENSKI

translated by Rose Styron and Olga Carlisle

From MOSAIC

From the Window of a Plane

In the world of friends, where travel is slower,
What do you do there, in the world of rain?
Who shares the segments of your tangerine?
Which exams do you take again?

Or, mistress, full of the charm of arrogance
Do you toss your head, defiant, solemn,
And run like musical hammers out
Along the railings, among the columns?

O prima donna! do you still play pranks?
Or is it that, chilled, having left your bed
You wander barefoot, nor dare to lift
The receiver, heavy as dumbbells of lead.

I hear you've married. Healed, I forget you.
Then why do you freeze as fresh light rain
Over the streaming landscape freezes
Freezes

attentive

the wing of the plane?

—1960

NORMAN MAILER

THE FIRST DAY'S INTERVIEW

Sometimes I think my work may be seen eventually as some literary equivalent (obviously much reduced in scale) to Picasso. My vice, my strength, is beginnings. Usually I begin well—it is just that I seem to have little interest in finishing. It seems adequate to start a piece, go far enough to glimpse what the possibilities and limitations might be, and then move on. Which for that matter is close to the discrete temper of our time.

This interview was an experiment. Unfinished one obviously. As an attempt to breach an opening into The Psychology of the Orgy, it has a few charms. It may even be possible to write a good book this way; such a book would be a novel. I can think of nothing very much like it, except perhaps for Gide's *Corydon*, but the difference is most particular. In *Corydon*, Gide stepped aside from his Self, and appeared nominally as André Gide-the-Interviewer speaking to some young talented homosexual artist, a man not unlike the hero of *The Immoralist*. He thus divided his dialogue between two Gides: a young, conventional, severe, most well-mannered and rather agitated young prig, (the "I" of *Corydon*) and the subject, a saturnine, scientifically articulated, rather sinister (in the proper tone of the period) man of talent.

In this fragment—*The First Day's Interview*—the encounter is less narcissistic. The subject is a Norman Mailer, a weary, cynical, now philosophically turned hipster of middle years; the interviewer is a young man of a sort the author was never very close to. The vector of the dialogue is therefore opposite to *Corydon*. In that book, Gide appears in a conventional suit and tries to take a trip across the room into himself. He is

hoping to seduce his readers. On the contrary, in this piece printed here, the author in full panoply is pretending to travel back to society in order to seduce the brain of the young critic he never was. One might call it a Counter-Diabolism to Gide's method, and be not at all presumptuous—if one managed, small matter, to finish the book.

THE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Is this going to be an important book?

MAILER: Perhaps my most important book.

INT.: Why?

MAILER: Because of its subject.

INT.: You're going to talk about murder in it.

MAILER: As well as a few other things.

INT.: If I may guess from the prevalence of your themes...

MAILER: Please do.

INT.: Well, I imagine you'll have something to say about suicide. And perversion?

MAILER: Yes.

INT.: And cancer of course.

MAILER: One shouldn't be flippant about cancer.

INT.: I get the impression that often you are.

MAILER: It's only because I have not been ready to explain what was behind the remark.

INT.: Whereas now you will.

MAILER: A more or less formal attempt will be made.

INT.: I hope so. At any rate let me repeat the list: Murder, suicide, perversion, cancer; the orgy?

MAILER: Yes.

INT.: Will this be called *The Psychology of the Orgy*?

MAILER: Perhaps.

INT.: The orgy. That calls to mind some of your declarations about the orgasm.

MAILER: I dislike that word.

INT.: You virtually made it a parlor game to talk about it.

MAILER: If I did, I'm sorry.

INT.: You must have known what you were doing.

MAILER: That's why I'm sorry. I did it to attract attention to myself. Now I pay the price.

INT.: You seem to think you can get away with anything if you tell the truth about yourself. The fact of the matter is that I for one would like to like you. I like your work. (*Pause*) As a matter of fact I have to admit I like it more today than I did when it came out.

MAILER: Yes.

INT.: But I don't like your aggressiveness. Why can't you let the work speak for itself. Why all these...

MAILER: Stunts?

INT.: Precisely. Why must you attract attention to yourself?

MAILER: I'm weary of that now. But at the time I felt as if I were sick, and attention given to me by others was my fastest cure.

INT.: Did it work that way?

MAILER: I don't know. One never knows. I did succeed in getting attention, and everyone takes me more seriously today, but I must wonder if I haven't lost something.

INT.: What might that be?

MAILER: My will to work. It all seems less desperate today. The need to get the work out, I mean.

INT.: I should think so. The rules for literary conduct are the effective essence, after all, of the experience of a good many writers in the past. You break too many rules. I know that people critical of your ideas often advance the argument that you have insufficient respect for the culture of the past.

MAILER: Which is a way of saying, "Insufficient respect for the acquired experience of the past."

INT.: I should think so.

MAILER: I have to agree. It is a lack, and the older I get, the more I come to understand that my talent—such as it is—has been crippled by this lack.

INT.: "Such as it is." You become positively modest.

MAILER: Allow me a convention or two. I would like some of the people who detest my work, and can't bear me, to go a little of the way into this book.

INT.: This interview.

MAILER: This interview. Modesty helps. Modesty is a lubricant for unpleasant intrusions.

INT.: In sex as well.

MAILER: Let's not get into difficulties right away.

INT.: All right. Let's not. You asked me here as a literary referee to help you keep close to your subject. You said you needed that.

MAILER: I do. My mind is as weak as the mind of an old man. It wanders. It dissipates. I cannot finish everything I like to finish. And this subject is too large to wander about in alone.

INT.: Murder and suicide. Cancer and the orgy. I should think so. You want my presence, therefore, as a midwife.

MAILER: I think better when I'm talking to someone. That's the first symptom of a writer who's losing his talent. Writing after all is one of the sublimations of onanism. As one gets away from such vices, one loses one's talent.

INT.: How quickly you sweep over complexities.

MAILER: But that is why I want an interview. I have no patience left for quiet exposition. In conversation you can put writing and onanism in a phrase. People know what you're talking about or they don't. In an essay you must obey formal concerns which I have not the enthusiasm to obey any longer.

INT.: But you cannot do an important work unless you submit to one or another formal discipline. We just agreed on that.

MAILER: I contradict myself already. Except I don't really. It's not a matter of what I would like to do. It's reduced right now to do what I can do. I've tried to command a sustained essay on this subject—I can't seem to get over the first few pages. My style immediately becomes tiresome. It takes on the empty sonorous tones of the kind of writers whose work I despise because they write authoritatively without a full spectrum of experience. They do not know enough about their subject to write a book. Which fits my condition. So my style becomes as bad as theirs.

INT.: I don't want to be tiresome, although I suppose that's my function, but why...?

MAILER: Why write a book if you don't know enough to write it?

INT.: That's what I was going to say.

MAILER: Because what I have to say is sufficiently serious to find a style.

INT.: If you could, what sort of style would you like to find?

MAILER: Something as grand as the style of Karl Marx... There! I spoiled the mood.

INT.: I do find Marx unreadable.

MAILER: He's worth the effort. In a way he's a fine test for a literary mind.

INT.: I think he is an absolute bore.

MAILER: People who use the word "bore" usually develop nothing forthright in my associations.

INT.: Some have accused me of being a touch donnish.

MAILER: There is a cloying English simplicity to your remarks.

INT.: The I-am-simple school of Oxford interrogation?

MAILER: There you go. First time I've smiled.

INT.: Good, tell me about Karl Marx.

MAILER: Marx had something enormous to say. And he did the work of preparation. So his style has weight and texture.

INT.: What does that mean?

MAILER: You're right. Weight and texture are dull words. Marx has to be read line by line. He has something to say in every phrase. He knew his subject, knew it as strategist and as tactician. He wrote like one of the greatest generals whoever lived. I like that image. It just came to mind. War is often dull in its details, as is Marx, but the dullness is never flaccid. Marx always has more to say than we can stuff into a sentence, even as a general may have more men and supplies to mount in a major attack than he can ever join onto a given road. The marching may be dull, but one senses as one slogs along that one is obeying the overlying tension of a large mind, the mind of one's general. This mind is bold but it is also enormously tenacious in its grasp of detail. And it does

not leave out important detail it has been too lazy to acquire.

INT.: Whereas your mind, by implication, is bold but lazy.

MAILER: No doubt it is lazy first, and merely bold in compensation.

INT.: You will lose the new audience you have gained if you become modest again.

MAILER: (*Gloomily*) It is too late to worry about anything but one's work.

INT.: This is the wrong day for an interview. You are obviously depressed.

MAILER: It is a very bad day, but one must make a start. There will be better days.

INT.: I see the burden of leading this discussion is up to me.

MAILER: For the moment.

INT.: Then to return to your use of military imagery—which parenthetically is psychologically symptomatic—

MAILER: Yes, yes. Militarism, psychic wounds, fears of castration, homosexuality; I'm familiar with the formula.

INT.: Anything to draw a flash of arrogance.

MAILER: Which I never truly possessed.

INT.: Sound like your detractors. (*Holds up a hand*) Enough. The loose associations of your mind seem to be contagious. I will try to get down to punctilio. Let me use the military image. If Marx is a general, and *Das Kapital* the record of a huge and successful war, what do you see this interview becoming if it is successful?

MAILER: An old fashioned cavalry raid with rusty equipment, tired horses, and beat troops which will go out nonetheless into a terrain Marx never dared.

INT.: Never dared, or didn't know about?

MAILER: Perhaps he had intimations. Sometimes I think he saw himself occupying this land as well—if he lived to be a hundred. But of course he would never have cheated the subject by interview.

INT.: Call you to order. Say something decent about the form of the interview.

MAILER: It is natural for our time. We will talk about the kind of things one should discuss on television. We will be

superficial but quick. We will not slip into the gulf of unreadable prose. We will be diverting.

INT.: Mann once said, "Only the exhaustive is truly interesting."

MAILER: He was right. But one needs huge loins to be not merely exhaustive but artful as well. I can hope at best to do no more than pass lightly over treacherous philosophical ground. We will discuss in one or another of a hundred contexts the meanings of such resistant words as "dialectical" and "existential." As an immediate illustration of the method, I believe I'll point out that an interview is dialectical. Any dialogue between two people is a natural dialectic. Each creates the response of the other. So it is possible that the experience of acquainting oneself with my grab bag of ideas, notions, arguments, examples, and *lapses*, (as they are illumined and dissipated by your responses) will provide the reader with a sense of the dialectic that will be better than any exposition of the word by me.

INT.: What about existentialism? Is the form of the interview also suited for that?

MAILER: Do you have a comfortable idea of what the word means?

INT.: I've read a smattering of Sartre. I have a dim familiarity with the work of Jaspers and Heidegger.

MAILER: And know a little more about Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky?

INT.: Et cetera, et cetera. I admit it. I don't have a comfortable sense of the word. It makes me uneasy. I use it all the time myself. Sometimes with authority. I'll say, "Oh, yes, Mailer's trying to become a Marxian existentialist"—mind you, I don't really talk about you that much—and I get a laugh I must say. You know I've noticed that one need only put large words together with authority in the voice and people will laugh. Let an actress playing a grande dame exclaim on a stage, "Oh yes, what fearful decoration. *Puerile Baroque*," and everyone will roar.

MAILER: Most large words remind people of faeces or faces.

INT.: Why do you say that?

MAILER: I don't know. It seems right. I feel the truth of the thing first, and discover the explanations later.

INT.: Very existentialist.

MAILER: All interviews are existential so far as they are not edited, and are descriptive of the mood of the conversation. Which is another argument for trying to express one's ideas in this form. It gives the reader a sense of the present. That's the first notion to grasp about existential philosophy. The underlying assumption is that nothing in one's metaphysical scheme is as important as one's sense of the present. The truth is found first in the gestalt. Not in the abstractions of logic.

INT.: I think I have a firm grasp of "gestalt" as a word, but it would be helpful to those who read this interview.

MAILER: You define it.

INT.: Well, gestalt is context. It's *swarm*, if you know what I mean. It's the mood, the totality of an experience.

MAILER: Too vague.

INT.: Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo because he couldn't sit on his horse. The gestalt would add that he had a venereal disease which made his saddle an instrument of torture.

MAILER: Well, I don't know. It's still too logical. Gestalt is as bad a word as existential. Let us say that as we're talking an insect crosses my field of vision. A brown worm the size of a maggot. I reach forward and crush it. Nausea turns a small spasm in my throat, but I go on talking. Can what I say be possibly the same as it would have been without the insect? No, is my answer. Given the severest discipline of mind, my words may be the same, my thought may not waver from its intention but my voice will alter just perceptibly and as it does, my argument will affect your unconscious more or less agreeably since the unconscious, unlike the mind, listens not to words, but to the voice.

INT.: I'm going to be literal. Why will your voice change?

MAILER: Because I've just killed something, I have altered the gestalt of the room, shifted the rhythms of life which are present. Gestalt, as I use it, is the harmony or discord of the life present in the context which in this case is you, me, the furniture, the room and the insect.

INT.: Why include the insect? Men are men and insects are insects.

MAILER: But men and insects are not separate if each can give emotion to the other. This, you see, would be one of the implicit logics in existentialism. Existence precedes essence. Emotion determines causality.

INT.: And is causality all?

MAILER: By the style of this logic, it is more significant than lack of causality. Action determines more than sentiment. But we will go back to this again and again. At the moment I would rather not overload my sense of the proportions of this interview.

INT.: And what gives you this sense of proportion?

MAILER: Again you go too fast, too soon. Let us say that my instinct is refined, weathered, dulled and converted by my experience and thus gives me a sense of the moment so far as my character permits my instinct to be heard.

INT.: But that is just *your* instinct, *your* character, *your* sense of proportion.

MAILER: Yes, but I would deaden the life of my argument if I did not obey the knots and quirks of my particular rhythms. I cannot advance an argument which will be vital (read: universal) to my readers until I obey what is particular to me.

INT.: And this is existentialist?

MAILER: Let us say it is true to my mood. I know nothing about Heidegger, but I get the impression from Barrett's book, *Irrational Man*, that Heidegger might argue mood has precedence over matter. I know I would argue that.

INT.: Why?

MAILER: Too difficult to talk about yet.

INT.: Let me be the judge.

MAILER: Mood is a harmony. The harmony of a gestalt. The harmony of the life in the room, or the harmony one senses in a landscape. And harmony permits one to relax. As one relaxes, so new perception comes from the conduits of the unconscious, and one has added one's contribution to the mood which is now subtly different but is still alive in the

growing *tissue* of previous sensation, precisely that tissue which was the mood of the previous moment. When a mood is shattered, the life in the room contracts, and a new mood, discontinuous to the last, begins its existence.

INT.: Most sensuous.

MAILER: Now I contract with annoyance. In a second or a minute, depending on your sensitivity you will sense my annoyance and react in turn. A new mood will begin. It will be perhaps less interesting than the last.

INT.: You are annoyed. Why did my expression "most sensuous" irritate you?

MAILER: Because it was obvious. And I was chasing a thought which was just at the end of my limited reach. One does not trap a butterfly by clapping one's hands.

INT.: You are too delicate to live.

MAILER: I may be too delicate to think. (*Lights a cigarette*) All right. Since you bring me to a full stop, I may as well make a confession. My character is such that I must confess a small viciousness in order to prime a new thought. So I will admit I was irritated when you said, "most sensuous," because quite contrary to breaking my mood, you accelerated it, which is another matter entirely. A sexual example came to mind immediately and it was a good one. It would have made my remarks about mood less tenuous.

INT.: Then why didn't you give it instead of abusing me?

MAILER: My ambition interfered.

INT.: Your ambition? Your mind is most elliptic.

MAILER: My ambition at the moment is to seduce all those readers who detest what they think are my ideas. They are the readers I wish to keep.

INT.: I wonder why.

MAILER: Because obviously it is more exciting to capture a hostile reader than tickle a friendly one. And these hostile readers have a preconceived notion of my character which makes it most difficult to talk to them. They see me as oppressive, clumsy, brutal, and mired in the lowest expositions of sex. So my plan was to march lightly for the first few days and reconnoiter no sexual thicket.

INT.: Charming. You'll never get power if you give away your maps before you've begun to move.

MAILER: I don't know if I want power anymore. I think I would rather be clear in my mind. The compromises one has to make in acquiring power dull the brain irreparably.

INT.: Since you are now too pure for power, would you then betray your ambition and give your sexual example.

MAILER: I think I've lost the mood.

INT.: Ugh.

MAILER: You disapprove?

INT.: The mark of a serious man is that he is capable of restoring his mood.

MAILER: I'm no longer as young as I want to be. An abrupt restoration of mood is as punishing to the body as starting an automobile in high gear. It's the sort of thing that brings on a cold.

INT.: Do complaints also prime new thought?

MAILER: They enable me to recover old thoughts. I was speaking of mood as a harmony. You invoked the qualities of the sensuous. So I thought of sex. Of a particular kind of sex. Sensuous sex. The sex of... I do not like to use the word "mature." The sex, let us say, of those who have been with sex for more than a little time. They are not young. They do not have that mixture of lust and private fantasy which makes for onanistic heat, for dirty heat, the sex let us say of two adolescents who burst on one another with the excitement of smashing a taboo. No, there is that other sex which comes to people when they are older, a sex of mood. Each one feels the mood of the other, each moves more delicately, aware now that one is no longer altogether attractive, and so one is vastly more attentive to the small offerings and polite withdrawals of the gift.

INT.: I don't want to interrupt.

MAILER: I'm glad you did. The description embarrasses me. It is too chaste. But the alternative is to speak prematurely of the parts of the body, the odors of the act, or discuss such mechanical propositions as the flow of energy.

INT.: Reichian terminology?

MAILER: I'm afraid so. Let us put it this way. Sex-as-mood is a conversation with respect for nuance. Does one raise one's voice to make a point?—one may soften the next remark. Does one wait too long?—the whip of wit must intervene. The dialogue of such sex is tender, it is respectful—it respects the slow conversion of character into mood, it seeks for an artful loss of each separate identity in order to find and give life to the mood which passes from body to body.

INT.: This is the only way sex-as-mood can exist?

MAILER: No. It is only one way. When I spoke of mood as a harmony of everything which lives in the gestalt, I should have explained that not all harmonies are peaceful. There are moods of apprehension, of unrest, excitement, of dread, horror, fear, pending cruelty, whatever one cares to name.

INT.: What separates a mood of horror from a mood which is suddenly shattered and so creates horror?

MAILER: You are close to the difficulty. I don't know if one can explain it. But it may be worth the attempt. Conceive of a landscape which is mysterious. Let me be banal—a landscape which is suggestive of doom. A landscape fit for a nightmare, a dark field across which one must walk. The shadows of the moon are cruel. Now across the field a laugh is suddenly heard, a merry laugh. Does it break the mood?

INT.: I should think so.

MAILER: Not necessarily. The laughter can give new intensity to the mood, offer ironic substance to its shape.

INT.: You speak as if the mood is alive.

MAILER: In a sense mood may be alive.

INT.: Like an organism?

MAILER: You anticipate me. I was about to say that a mood is a psychic organism. Like all living things it reacts to each new breath of the environment. It can grow, be wounded, weakened, changed, colored, fortified, it can adapt itself to many a change or shift in its circumstances. It can also be killed. As a psychic organism, it is obviously more delicate than any other kind of organism, and so it takes very little to kill a mood. But like any other organism, a mood is mysterious, and the most exceptional intrusions can give it

life. In my conventional landscape of horror, it may take precisely the sound of a merry laugh to give individuality to the horror. The laughter may sustain the mood just as it was ready to languish, or equally, the laughter may wither the mood by revealing it to itself as absurd. As is true of all organisms, the possibilities are limitless.

INT.: But what is the ground? What is the field, or the seat of the mood? To be literal, where is it located?

MAILER: We must avoid science-fiction. If I start to speak of the air, or of psychic waves, or psychic fields of energy we will both be lost in a terminology for which we have no aptitude and no qualifications. We are literary men, more or less. Let us keep the subject evocative. It may be possible that literature has more to offer on the nature of the universe than the cyclotron.

INT.: The alternative is to leave the reader altogether confused. You cannot talk of psychic organisms without trying to describe some of their properties. Otherwise the suspicion arises that you invoke nothing more serious with your talk of psychic organisms than our old friend, the poltergeist.

MAILER: (*Sighs*) The subject is ineffable. If I try to describe it, I will kill it. There are those who will know what I am talking about and those who won't. I can only hint at the possibility of a new direction or two, for those who know already what I am talking about.

INT.: I thought you wanted to reach the readers who were hostile to you.

MAILER: The irony is that most of the people who are hostile to my work are precisely those people who have the deepest sense of what I am writing about.

INT.: I think you must do better than this.

MAILER: Can we avoid that total worry of where a mood exists? Whether it exists in the separate bodies of the people and objects who make up the mood, or whether it races through the air between them, or envelops all in a cloud, or is all of these things at once. It is enough to say: it exists because I feel it. What it looks like I do not know, but how it feels I am not likely to forget.

INT.: Is that really satisfactory as an explanation?

MAILER: Do you use the word "relationship" in your speech?

INT.: Often. It is a modern word.

MAILER: Do we have a relationship?

INT.: Of sorts.

MAILER: Can you think of a definite relationship you have with someone?

INT.: My wife.

MAILER: What does it look like?

INT.: What does it look like?

MAILER: The relationship.

INT.:

MAILER: Scored a point.

INT.: Yes, you did.

MAILER: Can we keep a side score through this dialogue?

INT.: We'll play Beaver.

MAILER: Excellent.

INT.: Do you feel like quitting for the day?

MAILER: I've never had the sense to quit when I'm ahead.

INT.: Nonetheless, one of my functions is to serve as an aerial editor who cuts so to speak on the fly. And I think we've done enough. What I ask for tomorrow is a presentation which will be a degree more formal.

MAILER: I promise nothing.

INT.: Will we get into murder?

MAILER: That may take a while.

PAUL CARROLL

THE WICKED & UNFAITHFUL SONG OF MARCEL DUCHAMP TO HIS QUEEN

A trifle pompously, my love, you move among
the mass of nerve-
tissue in my cranium:
and as you move
you have become the last
of my inconsequential ironies. At best,
chess, too, just
a question of pure chance.
A film of dust
girdles your body: for once

I shift you on the board, you will become
a solution for which
there never was a problem:
that old itch
for order, which we like to hint
exists in what we do. And yet, that blueprint
I fashioned once
for the motions of the body
ended nice-
ly in a cemetery

of empty uniforms: priest & bus-
boy, butler, gendarme,
undertaker, horseman—jointless.
Art? a form
of intimate hygiene for
the ghosts we are. More work, those wolftraps for
the intellect
(one must always work,
sweet, to contradict
one's taste)—the hanger tack-

ed upright to the floor; that urinal
I signed: R MUTT.
And that geometric textbook to dangle
in diagonal at
a corner of my porch
until, buffeted by raw winds, bleach-
ed by sun & sleets,
it got the facts of life.
Or those glass discs
twirling on the phonograph
to tease the ear & eye. How predictable
poor Picabia
became. And such a fool
to bitch all day
& thrash about, sob-
bing how slovenly God goes about his job.
I'll let you sit,
my sweet, and move the Rook
instead. Why not?
Death is the only good joke.

GEORGIA MCKINLEY

Across the Line

The Brother Grober decided to stop for a moment to take up strength, and pulling strongly on the hand brake, brought the old Packard to quivering rest beside a jagged little mesquite bush. Looking vacantly about him, he noted that in the fields scattered white heads of cotton, missed by the mechanical picker, hung broken-necked down their stalks, sprayed with black mud and wagging sadly in the breeze; it all should have been taken up and burned against the boll-weevil, but the land no doubt belonged to Spurgis since his house stood up at the end of the road, and poor Spurgis was sick. They had told him about Spurgis less than half an hour ago down at Renfrew's and he was doing the best he could; already he was on his way up to pray for him. They said down at Renfrew's that the man had been sick for several years.

He stuck his head out the open window of his car, lifted his red horseshoe chin and nudged urgently at the air, then laying his wide face flat to heaven, closed his eyes in the sun and prepared to attain God's presence. He must have strength to carry him, for he had been at it all day, up and out for sixty or seventy miles; four sicknesses, three loved ones gone on, and everywhere the complaints and worries of cotton crop failure. You could say, fairly speaking, that he had already completed his duty; he had gotten over into the next county where there were other churches, but this man Spurgis was sick... It might be, he thought in a weary rise of spirits, that God had woven the web of his day to lead him to Spurgis.

With his head in position to receive the fall of grace, he

drawing by George Thompson

began. Everything happened quite quickly. The totality of bliss dropped upon him at once and vastly, entempling his spirit where he sat on the still plain in his old car; he stood at once within the radiance of His mind and from it felt the power and strength of righteousness pour into him to be stored and used in the work. God's presence ran intimately as the blood in his veins and he was restored.

Humming a hymn, he turned on the starter. He had had this power of prayer from young manhood when he had come down from the Ozarks seeking a bigger sky and had found this place of the low horizon, this treeless emptiness beneath the enormous reach of heaven. God was the central light of the universe up in the vastness above; he prayed and preached outdoors in revival meetings, refusing every offer to come under a roof into empty stores or meeting halls. But at last they had set down on the flat earth a high square building made of crooked slabs of limestone, rust-red against dead-white, with two blunt towers at the front, from which tall blue neon letters urged across the plain, "COME" and "TO GOD."

Then he had realized what they wanted and preaching in the church he gave them a return. Sunday after Sunday he built up before their hollowed eyes the celestial city: golden asphalt, marble towers and silver neon at the gates, a magnificent and mighty construction. When the first Sputnik appeared in the news his deacons came and kicked the mud clods about in the churchyard until he came out through the church and slid open the door. They stood with hung heads; if he tried to look at them the pupils of their eyes turned backwards to their own unthinkable thoughts. At last the head deacon sent up a few quivering words which floated above them all. "This Sputnik now, Brother," he said with a weak querulousness. The Brother Grober was very angry: first, at the thing batting about God's sky, and then at the lack of faith in his own work. He eyed the men before him. At last he hissed furiously through the church door, "Farther up! It's all farther up!"

Oh, the dirty streaks of the rockets through space privately

caused him to glory the more in the pure immaterial essence of God, the omnipotent boundless force of pure good up in the infinity of the sky beyond the sky.

And he had this power to pick up God's energy as a radio picks up broadcasts from a station. He labored greatly in its use, for it was hard work to lift your spirit upward in concentrated desire to reach God hour after hour and day after day. Most ministers preached on Sundays and refused to get their souls sweated with personal prayer during the week, and other people in this poverty-pressed region were, he felt, often too shiftless and weak-willed to pray. The result was that he was overworked from praying singlehanded for a whole county, and was yet, at the end of a long day, stopping before an unknown house to pray for a stranger over across the line.

He parked his car and stood beside it to take the shape of present duty. He had come up a slow rise of the black land and before him the bare little silvered house stood isolate in a high bright stillness. Mounting the porch, he saw that the boards underfoot were shrunk and splintered and that its posts and the whole board-and-strip structure above him had an air of fragility as if any pressure might puff it to gray dust. He gentled his big feet and the thrust of his motion; he was a powerful man with fervent blue eyes slotted into his face along strong cheek structure; his skin was a fiery red and his hair an orange-brown. He lowered his big face to peer through the screendoor, rattled it quickly, then jerked his head back.

A woman was in view, quite close to him at the other side of the screen. On this bare sweep, he had not come unnoticed and he saw that the fleeting brown eyes of the little woman before him had already known his enlarging image for fifteen minutes since he turned off the highway. Her expression as she looked up at him did not begin with his arrival but continued in unaltered privacy. Her eyes ran on beyond him to his car, leaping swiftly through the air, going softly everywhere at once with a look of modest guilt, as if wondering what she could have done of enough importance to bring a stranger up the long dirt road. Presently her head went up

and down. "Doo-oo," she said decently. Except for her flying eyes, her face with its tough, browned skin had the stiff, hardened-over look of lonely country women in their middle age.

So he began. "I'm Brother Grober from Temple of God—down to Leola," he said in hearty fellowship. She nodded politely but kept looking over his shoulder down the road, as if since he had come up it, there was nothing to stop others from following. She was very small and spare and he drooped one shoulder so that she could see across it once and for all that there was no one back of him.

"We're members of the Beeville Baptist," she said and the quick blur of her eyes padded over his face. "We've kep' up our membership," and upon this certainty her eyes left the road and focussed him fully for the first time.

"Well, that's fine," he boomed into the bright air about him. He thought of the quick-swung doors and the grateful eyes he was used to. Sometimes when greeting those who needed prayer he would notice that his own hands holding theirs in the double handclasp of fellowship were so full and richly red that it appeared the blood in his veins was ready to burst forth to warm, to enclose, to comfort...

"I heard your husband was sick," he said, his voice taking fiber from these thoughts, "I come up to pray."

The woman giggled and he stared at her in surprise. The casing of her hard-burned skin, heated by a radiant blush, cleared to transparency and disclosed within it the vacant, absolutely unused face of a young girl. Eyes as open to him as child's looked out. Suddenly she gave a louder tinny giggle and her head dropped. "It's my Daddy's sick, I ain't married," she said. The loose knot of her hair slipped forward as her head moved; he noted its black-and-white color; for a moment it seemed to him the fallen bun wagged against her neck like the broken heads of cotton down their stalks. Her limbs were scraggly and brown as a dead cotton plant. She took a last glance down the road. "Well then," she said, "come on in," and her fingers scrabbled at the knot of her hair.

Now that the screen was not between them he could have, he should have, taken her hands but they remained minutely busy with her hair. He was a man rich in ease with other people, but for a moment he had lost the woman's identity because of the interior face which had looked out at him, and in his confusion he lost his opportunity to greet her forever. She was wearing, he now saw, a pair of pedal pushers faded colorless by the sun and a white T-shirt with a cracked little green palmtree stamped on it between her small, nut-like breasts.

"How is he?" he asked heartily, to make up for not shaking hands.

She lifted the closed brown husk of her face to him peacefully. "He hadden been able to get up even to go to the bathroom for six years now," she said.

He did not want to waste time by getting off onto the facts, which were in every case interminable, but with this remark her situation so opened before him that it would have been bad manners not to go on. He made an impatient gesture of his big head. "Well, who does the work? Are you all alone here?"

Her narrow shoulders jerked and she looked away from him. "My brothers was married already before Daddy got so bad and Momma died when we were little." Her eyes drifted across his. "The neighbors crops the land and I take care of my Daddy. They come over real often, they're real good—my brothers?" she said, her voice rising interrogatively, then it ran out and off.

"We must seek God's help," he said firmly.

She nodded in agreement. "He's got the azma," she said, "that's him breathing."

He became conscious of a sound he had been hearing since he arrived but which he had set aside in his mind as some defect in the plumbing of the little house; a rasp and swirl as of something trapped: water, as he had thought, in a plugged pipe.

"God has divine power to help us," he said. The continuous grinding sound, when identified as the drawing of breath,

seemed quite loud. "God will hear our prayers," he said, raising his voice slightly.

Again she nodded. "You like to see him?" she asked.

"No," he said, holding up a quick hand, "we will pray."

"Well, take a seat—there," she said and pointed to the sofa. For the first time he looked about him at the little dry, sunscorched room. Big-flowered cretonne curtains tacked across the two windows had changed toward their inner edges to coffee stains on a yellow ground; the linoleum was dusty and cracked; the plush couch on which he sat was a profound blue beneath a disturbed cushion and so light gray-white elsewhere as to seem almost invisible. Nothing in the room appeared ever to have been used, as though the life of the house went on elsewhere, still these things, even to a row of little odd-shaped cushions marching off down the couch, had been placed here to fade in the sun.

He was startled to see appear again opposite him the empty young girl's face. "That's the most comfortable place you got," she said.

He nodded. "Very nice. Let us pray." He extended his arms before him and lifted his chin with a steep thrust, as though to provide leverage for his spirit, gathered his forces and his mind stretched outward toward his certainty of God.

The hoarse sound which was not in some mechanism of the house deepened, faltered and erupted into a watery explosion of coughing. "Millie," a voice wailed, "Millie..." It came to them weakly, after the loud coughing, like the sound borne backward as a body dropped through space into ultimate terror.

When he looked toward her, the girl was gone. In a moment he heard her rattle in the kitchen and go into another room. She was gone quite a little time. She returned without saying anything, sat down quietly and lowered her head.

Again he threw back his head, feeling slightly embarrassed, slightly hampered by the necessity to start over. Out, out, on and on again, now sweating a little from the effort. But this was what he had come for and he felt a rise and lift, a gather-

ing return of strength. The breathing began to speak again. "Millie, I dr-opped it. Millie."

Pliantly she lifted herself and whisked from the room, never looking at him. But the next time when he began to pray he fixed her with his eyes, head thrown back, watching her down the long bridge of his nose. Again he placed his thoughts upon God and began the long and delicate ascent but the room was filled with the other man's tyrannous breathing and he found himself unable to concentrate fully. Now at each roughness his spirit faltered and dropped momentum. Watching the girl he saw that she sat calm and flexible, perfectly ready to go either way. After all, he reflected angrily, it was *her* father. "You pray, too," he suddenly hissed at her, and obediently her lips began to move.

He passed on and up. He was not sure—he thought he had touched upon the sweet outer porches of grace. He began. "Gracious Heavenly Father, we come before you in humility of spirit..." He drove himself powerfully outward, willing the union with God. He had to keep his eyes on the girl and down his nose, as he watched her, enormous drops of sweat began to form between him and her. Through these he saw that her lips moved and were still with a constant dull rhythm as though she were repeating the same few words over and over again. "We come before Thee to pray for this home..." The ceaseless rush and recoil of the old man's breath carried with it his thoughts and his spirit. "—to ask that Thou in Thine infinite mercy look upon this sick man and..." Everything was not right; his connection was endangered. The old man's breathing deepened, strained, hacked a bit; the girl's eyes faltered; everything hung in the balance; he could not even remember what he wanted to pray for. If only, he thought, if only the old man would *stop* it, just stop breathing for a few minutes until he could finish his prayer.

Unexpectedly the little coughing spell subsided. "We pray that Thou wilt restore his health," he said with reckless loudness. His words snapped out into the room with the random crack and pop of wet laundry whipping on a line. He had nearly prayed for the wrong thing and it had startled

him but now he felt nothing but his own terrible fatigue. "Look in mercy upon this old man..." He poked the air with his chin, he stretched his neck, he lifted his arms. "Do not turn Thy back from him, save him, have mercy on us all." But it was a wail back up the slope of a long, helpless descent.

Across from him the girl still mechanically moved her lips, the old man breathed on.

Again he sought to rise but his soul lay torpid, will-less and still. "Amen," he chopped off. He bowed his head heavily down against his chest and sat on, exhausted. When he was younger he could pray all day and all night without feeling this tired. Once at a revival he had preached and prayed for ten hours straight... A suspicion wavered in his consciousness and he looked up at the girl: had *she* done something? worked against him in some way?

Startled, he rose to his full height with the thought and the girl got up also. "Is that all?" she said and her eyes faltered doubtfully against his. He looked at her distrustfully. He wondered if she knew anyone from his church; what if she started to tell it around that he had had trouble praying?

He narrowed the slots of his eyes upon her. "Well no, that's *not* all," he said, his face supporting an expression of kindness which felt rigid and weighty as iron. "I'm not going to forget you. I'll pray for your father and keep on praying for him. If you think I'm through... I'll pray night and day," he said warningly, his voice growing heated.

"It's real kind of you," she said. "God's will be done," she added and nodded.

That was it. He realized from the motion of her lips that that was what she had been saying the whole time he was praying. Sitting saying that over and over, not praying, not thinking of what he was praying for; how could he be expected to work against an attitude like that? Going through the screendoor, he looked up indignantly at the sky as if invoking it as witness of his difficulties, but found it now dimmer, fading to dusk, closing with night. Soon it would have grown shallow; black and flat as the fields around him, and his senses reeled in fright. What if this trouble should continue?

"I'll pray," he said to the girl urgently, going down the front steps. "I'll pray and pray." His face grew red with fury. From the car as it gave a great forward stagger down the road, he called back, sticking his great head out the window and shaking his fist at her, "You'll see—I'll pray for your father."

His voice, raging strongly as it was, eventually died down in the distance. The girl stood on at the door watching the ever-diminishing car, looking beyond it toward the highway, as if, this event having come to her up the dirt road, others still might follow. Behind her, the coughing began again, but she stood still, looking off and away, her face moved to excitement, defenceless against hope. But there before her lay the wide black fields in which, since she could remember, all sound and motion had been caught and held, a zone of stillness which barred the world from her, and in a moment her face closed over.

"*Millie,*" the voice called.

She turned immediately. "Yes Daddy," she called cheerfully, "I'm coming."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Cecil Dawkins (*The Mourner*) was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1927 and graduated from the state University there. In 1952-53 she received a Stanford University Writing Fellowship, after which she taught for five years at Stephens College, in Missouri. Since then she has been living in Wisconsin. This is her second story in THE PARIS REVIEW.

Hughes Rudd (*Miss Euayla is the Sweetest Thang*) is the co-winner of the Gertrude Vanderbilt Prize for Humor. He is on the staff of CBS News in New York. THE PARIS REVIEW No. 25 contained his short novel *The Lower Room*, which, through an editorial inadvertence, was not preceded by the following epigraph:

"Then was love so great that each man set his neighbor on high: but now hath love grown cold and the whole world is set in malice, and each doth pull down his neighbor to the lower room, and for this reason we come short of grace."

...from *The Desert Fathers*, translated from the Latin by Helen Waddell

Georgia McKinley (*Across the Line*) since her graduation from the University of Texas has lived in Troy, New York, where her husband is a physics professor at the Rennselaer Institute. Her first published story appeared in No. 21 of THE PARIS REVIEW.

RUSSIAN POETRY PORTFOLIO

Robert Lowell (*Two Poems by Boris Pasternak*) has published two books of poetry in the last two years, *Life Studies*, and his translation of *Phèdre*, and is now publishing a third, *Imitations*, a book of free translations from Heine, Rilke, Leopardi, Montale, Rimbaud, Villon, Pasternak, and others. In *The Seasons*, published here, Lowell has grouped together several separate Pasternak poems.

Rose Styron (*Poems by Tsvetayeva, Mandelstam, and Vozneisenski*) has published her poetry in the *American Scholar* and is now working on a book of poems. She is the wife of the novelist William Styron.

Richard Wilbur (*Three Poems by Anna Akhmatova*) has translated many poems—Jammes', Char's and Baudelaire's, for example—and one play, Molière's *Misanthrope*, which, as with Lowell's translation of Racine, he kept in rhymed couplets. Now he is working on a translation of *Tartuffe*. He is a Professor of English at Wesleyan.

INTERVIEWS

Olga Carlisle (*A Portfolio of Russian Poetry and Interview with Ilya Ehrenburg*) a French citizen who now lives with her husband in New York, is the granddaughter of Leonid Andreyev, the Russian playwright and short story writer. On a trip to Russia in the winter of 1960 she interviewed Ehrenburg and Boris Pasternak; the Pasternak Interview appeared in No. 24 of THE PARIS REVIEW. Random House is planning to publish a book of her impressions of Russia.

Donald Hall (*Interview with Marianne Moore*) has been widely published as a poet. A book of prose reminiscences, *String Too Short To Be Saved*, has recently appeared under the Viking imprint. He teaches at the University of Michigan.

ART PORTFOLIO AND ARTISTS

Pierre Schneider (on *Jacques Hérold*) frequently contributes art criticism to *L'Express* and to *THE PARIS REVIEW*. He is the author of several books of essays in French, of which the most recent is *L'Unique Source*.

George Thompson did the highly praised illustrations for Hughes Rudd's *The Lower Room* in *THE PARIS REVIEW* No. 25. He is a young American doing *free lance* layout and art work in Paris.

INVESTIGATION

Norman Mailer (*The First Day's Interview*) is one of the best known of American writers. His most recent book is *Advertisements for Myself*.

POETRY

Philip Booth (*Night Notes on an Old Dream*) is the author of *Letter from a Distant Island*. His second book of verse, *The Islanders*, will be published this fall by The Viking Press.

George Mackay Brown (*Harald, etc.*) is an Orkneyman like Edwin Muir, with whom he studied at Newbattle Abbey College. Mr. Brown has published one book of verse in England, *Loaves and Fishes*.

Paul Carroll (*The Wicked and Unfaithful Song of Marcel Duchamp to His Queen*) has appeared previously in *THE PARIS REVIEW*. He was the editor of *Big Table*.

Thom Gunn (*My Sad Captains*) is an Englishman now living in the United States. This poem provides the title for his forthcoming book of verse.

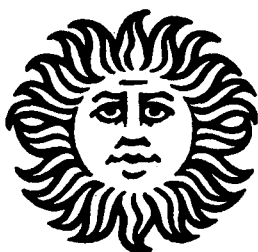
Malcolm Lowry (*Three Poems*) was born in Meyerside, England in 1902 and died in England in 1957; but he was away from England most of his life, voyaging frequently, often by sea, and spending long intervals in the United States, Mexico and British Columbia. His best known work is *Under the Volcano*, a novel he rewrote twice over a period of several years and finally published in 1947. No. 23 of *THE PARIS REVIEW* had in it his long autobiographical story *Through the Panama*. Mr. Earle Birney, who is helping Mrs. Lowry prepare her husband's poetry for publication, says he believes that *Death of Oaxaqueñan* is related to Chapter 10 of *Under the Volcano*, the generic episode for the novel.

W. S. Merwin (*October and The Nails*) recently published his fourth book of poems, *The Drunk in the Furnace*. Mr. Merwin has been living in London and France for most of the past decade, but spent the first part of 1961 in the United States, where he gave a number of readings and did research for a historical book in prose.

Charles Reynolds (*For Kate*) has been published in *The Fifties*.

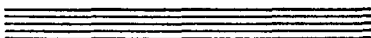
Frederick Seidel (*Dayley Island*) interviewed Robert Lowell in *THE PARIS REVIEW* No. 25. He now lives in France and is Paris Editor of *THE PARIS REVIEW*.

James Wright (*Laying in a Hammock at a Friend's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota and How My Fever Left*) has published two books of poems, *The Green Wall and Saint Judas*. His recent change of style is represented in these two poems.



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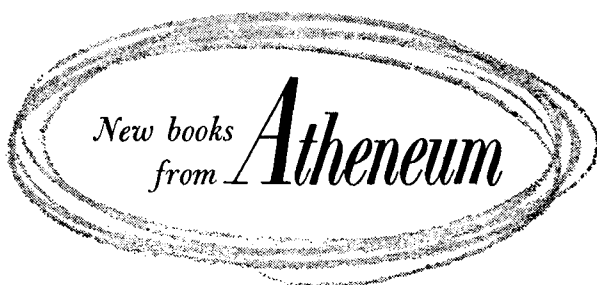
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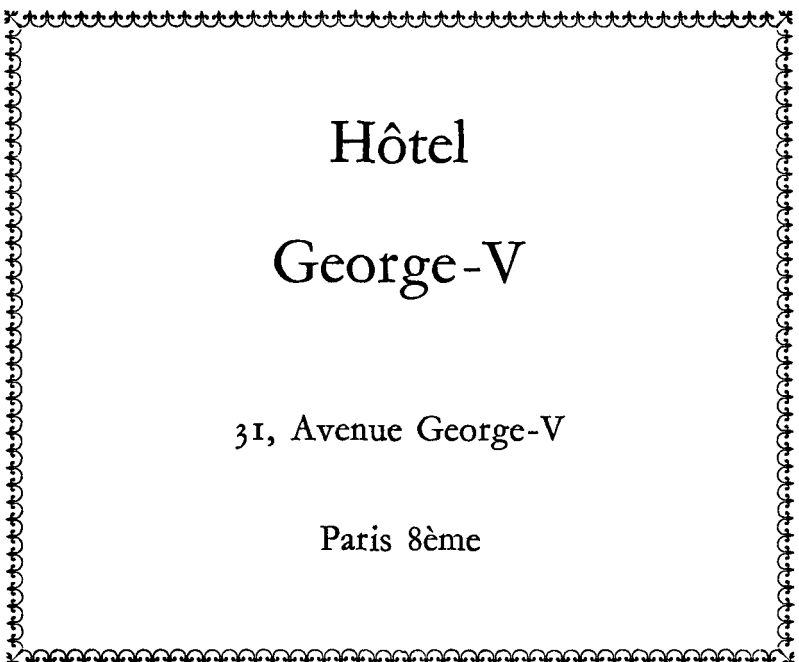
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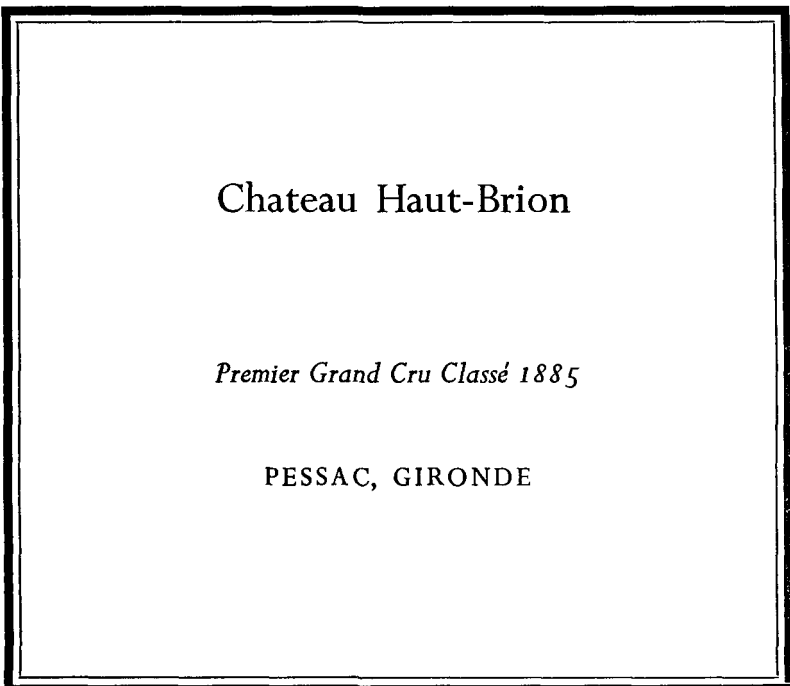
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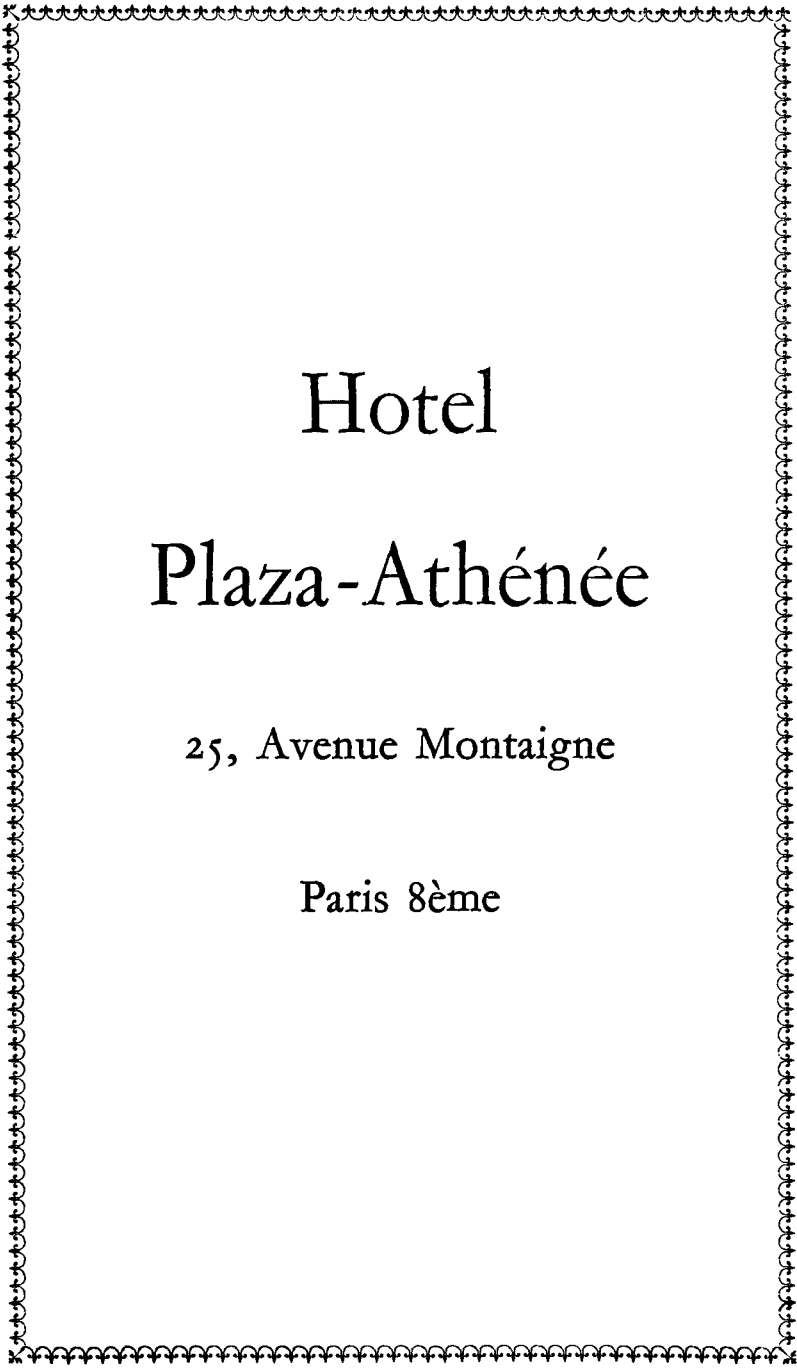
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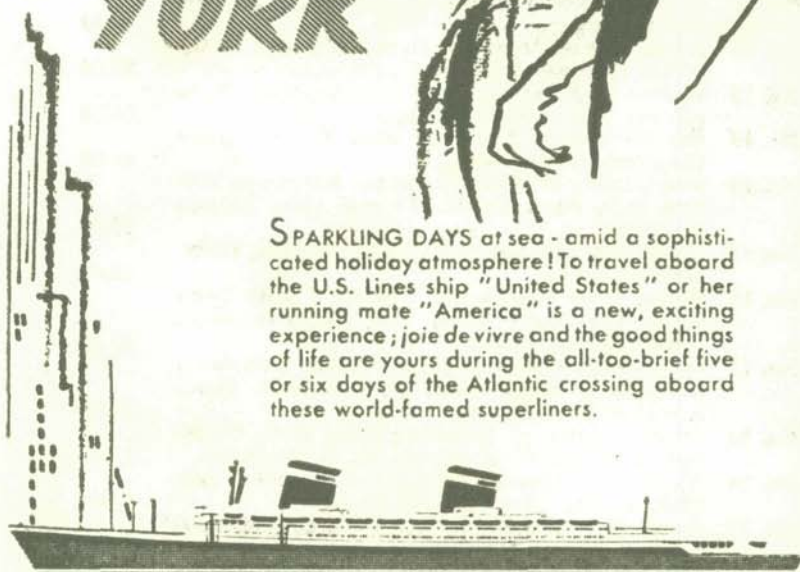
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